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# YOUTHFUL DILIGENCE



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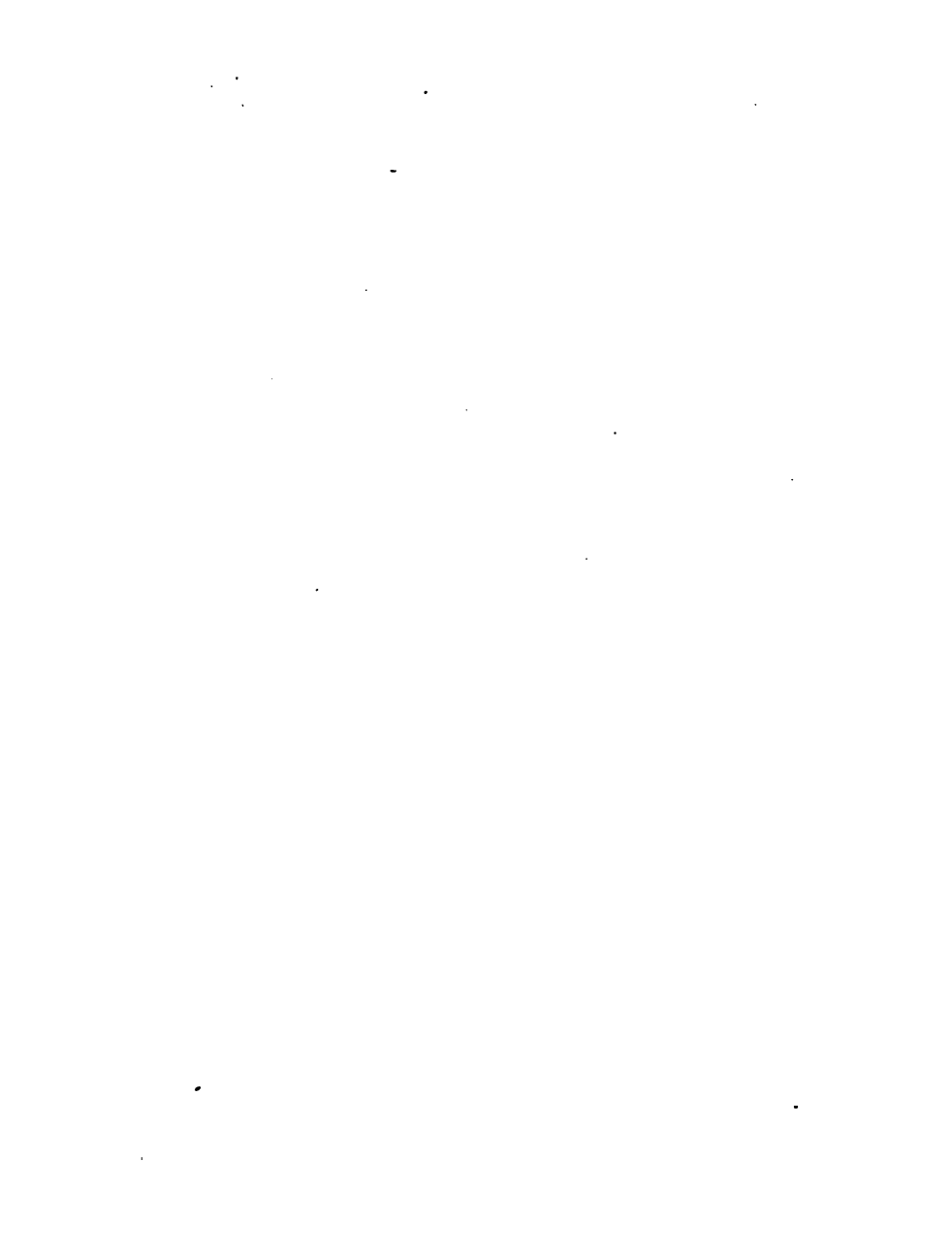


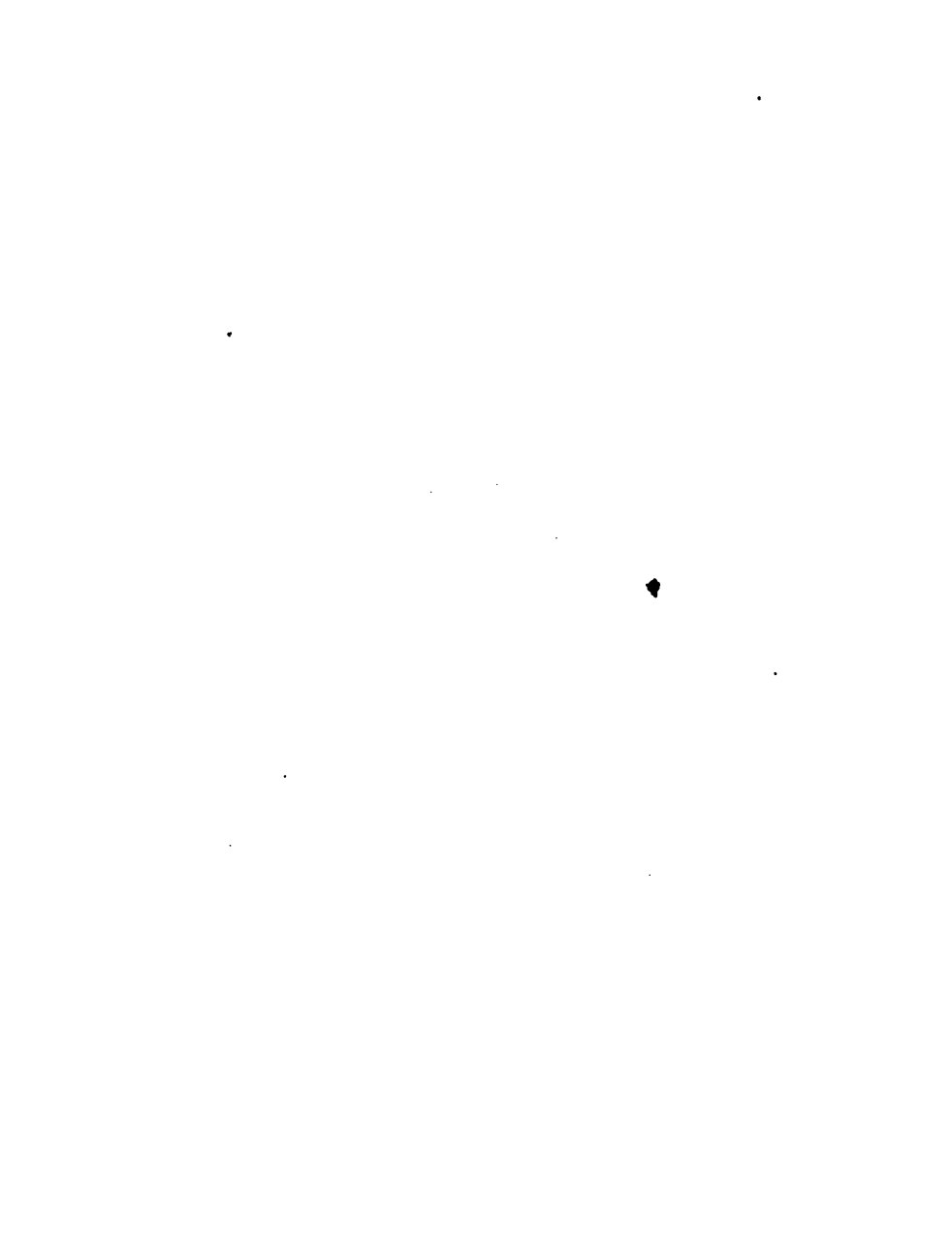
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**YOUTHFUL DILIGENCE**

**AND**

**FUTURE GREATNESS.**









CANOVA IN THE SCULPTOR'S STUDIO





CANOVA IN THE SCULPTOR'S STUDIO

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# YOUTHFUL DILIGENCE

## FUTURE GREATNESS



PASCAL'S FIRST ESSAY IN GEOMETRY

J. NELSON AND SONS

LONDON, EDINBURGH AND NEW YORK





# YOUTHFUL DILIGENCE

AND

FUTURE GREATNESS.

*A Book for the Young.*

BY THE LATE

REV. W. K. TWEEDIE, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "THE EARLY CHOICE," "NEED-TIME AND HARVEST,"  
ETC. ETC.



LONDON:

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## Preface.

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HERE are few things which it is more important to impress upon the minds of the young than these two facts;—*first*, that they have their comfort and success in life very much in their own hands; and *second*, that the manner in which they spend their season of youth must have a powerfully determining effect upon their whole future.

The well-known saying of Wordsworth, that “the child is father of the man,” is being visibly demonstrated every day, and in every place; and yet, amid the frivolity and impulsiveness of youth, it may not receive the amount of attention which so important a psychological fact demands.

Hence the necessity for such “biographies” as those contained in the present volume,

where the different seasons of life are shown to be linked to each other, and to grow out of each other, by a natural sequence; and where it is obviously seen that the "germ and prophecy" of the future are contained in the dispositions and tendencies of early days. The number of such biographical illustrations of this principle might be greatly augmented—the theme, as regards this, being almost indefinitely extensive. It is believed that in this little work a useful and judicious selection has been made.

The book may be regarded as a posthumous production of the late Dr. Tweedie, whose other works of a similar tendency have been, and still are, so deservedly popular. The first seven chapters were written by him, the others were added by another hand; and the whole is now given to the public with the earnest hope and prayer that the selection may be useful to many young persons of the present day.



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## I

### Leonardo da Vinci.

**I**F we heard it said of any man that he was one of almost universal genius, that he stood unrivalled for the extent of his knowledge in art and science, our curiosity would surely be excited to know more of his history.

If we were further told that he was as remarkable for the beauty of his person as for the capacity of his mind, our desire would be increased.

If it were added that he was a man of proud and kingly bearing, of sumptuous habits, and noble dispositions, all that would whet curiosity more and more. And if the whole were crowned by the intelligence that he was one of those regal geniuses which are sometimes sent into the world to impress us with the conviction that He who made man's na-

ture what it is can exalt it far above the common standard, the question would probably arise, Who was he? when did he live? what was he in youth? what in manhood? whence arose his preëminence?

Such a man, then, was LEONARDO DA VINCI, a son of Pietro da Vinci, a notary of Florence. He was born at the Castle of Vinci, in the Val d'Arno, not far from the Tuscan capital, in the year 1452, and his praise has seriously taxed the language of encomium to utter it all. There was in him "a grace beyond expression, which was rendered manifest, without thought or effort, in every act and deed."—"To whatever subject he turned his attention, however difficult, he was able, by his rare ability, to make himself absolute master of it."—"Extraordinary power was, in his case, conjoined with remarkable facility."—"Truly admirable, indeed, and divinely endowed, was Leonardo da Vinci."—Such are some of the expressions used to set forth his gifts and his acquirements. Nay, the enthusiasm of his biographers rises higher still, and we read that the radiance of his countenance, which was splendidly beautiful, brought cheerfulness to the heart of the most

melancholy, and the power of his word could move the most obstinate to say "Yes," or "No," as he desired.—After making full allowance for such passionate praise, there still remains enough to render this remarkable man an object of instructive study: there are lessons involved in his life which all would do well to learn. In truth, the charms of chivalry, the secrets of science, and the perfection of art were all in his possession—

"He scanned the heavens, and mysteries there  
Grew patent to his eagle ken,  
While beauteous things from earth and air,  
Like new creations, smiled on men.

He seized his pencil—all was grace;  
His chisel—marble seemed to live:  
All Nature's glories he could trace,  
And ravishment to mortals give."

What, then, does his life suggest to illustrate our present topic—the influence of the boy upon the man?

Even when Leonardo was a child, we read, he displayed a strong inclination and talent for painting. It appeared in several little drawings and sketches, which gave promise in the child of what the man did not belie. Captivated by these juvenile efforts and their



success, Leonardo's father showed them to a painter, Andrea del Verocchio. He also was astonished, and in due time the boy became the pupil of that painter, in whose studio the productions of the juvenile artist formed the wonder of all. But not merely aptitude for art, versatility in regard to other departments rendered the boy remarkable; and in several of these pursuits, as well as in his profession, he found a guide and counsellor in his master, Verocchio, who, it appears, loved and prized his pupil as one so gifted and ascendant deserved to be.

An incident is recorded regarding the early years of this boy, which may briefly illustrate his powers. His master was employed upon a painting of Christ when baptized in the Jordan by John, and the pupil was appointed to paint in one of the figures, which was that of an angel. But so exquisite was his part of the workmanship, and so far did it excel that of his master, that from that period the latter abandoned painting, and confined himself to sculpture and other departments of art,—“so much was he displeased to find that a mere child could do more than himself.”







THE PUPIL EXCELS THE MASTER

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The wonder produced by ~~such~~ early eminence is increased when we are told that after all Da Vinci at times ~~made~~ painting his amusement rather than his profession. A large portion of his time was taken up with poetry, music, astronomy, mathematics, sculpture, architecture, engineering, mechanics, botany, and anatomy. Can it be literally true, as has been recorded, that he was "not only a student of those arts and sciences—he was a master in them all"?

As this gifted man was careful in youth to lay a good foundation for the future, the structure which he reared on it was really one of the most wonderful ever constructed by mortal skill. Ardent in study, and eager in the pursuit of knowledge, his acquirements were not of that superficial kind which serve few purposes but those of vanity and show.\* On the contrary, he did thoroughly what he

\* This remarkable man left his opinions on various subjects in about thirteen manuscript volumes, in which the writing is from right to left. The following are some of the subjects discussed or referred to:—1. On the descent of heavy bodies, combined with the rotation of the earth. 2. On the earth divided into particles. 3. Of the earth and the moon. 4. Of the action of the sun on the sea. 5. On the ancient state of the earth. 6. On flame and the air. 7. On statistics. 8. On the descent of heavy bodies on inclined planes.—Besides these, we have his views on whirlpools, on vision, on military architecture, on some chemical processes, and various others—and all these by a man who, from boyhood, was devoted to painting!

did at all; and in arithmetic, for example, while only a boy, so rapid was his progress, and so searching his study, that he often confounded his master alike by the doubts which he raised and the questions which he asked. Even in early youth he thus gave premonition of what was coming, and modelled figures "which might be supposed to have proceeded from the hands of a master." In architecture also he prepared designs for various buildings; and when only a lad, suggested what was accomplished two centuries after his time, namely, the formation of a canal from Florence to Pisa, by utilizing the water of the Arno. In truth, this extraordinary genius actually made various discoveries in science, and produced inventions in physics, some of which have been rediscovered and reinvented since his day.

And lest it should be supposed that so happy a genius accomplished so much, or became so remarkable without effort, it should be noticed that he took elaborate pains in finishing what he painted—pains as elaborate as if the persistent drudgery of a mere plodder or a servile copyist were all he could accom-

plish. The minutest parts were exquisitely finished. When representing woven cloth, for example, the very threads were individually visible: when painting the countenance, each hair on the eyebrows was also finely individualized. In landscapes, every leaf and bud was carefully traced—in some cases the very dew-drop is visible on the flower. And so in other examples: thus minute or microscopic was his search for perfection—his determination to be thorough.

In his early youth Leonardo painted some objects so grotesquely, and in combinations so hideous, that even his father was scared, and fled from the sight; but it is no part of our object to describe these products of his pencil, powerful though they were. Let us rather accompany him along the path by which he advanced to his exalted place; and in doing so, we find him following any person of unusual appearance, studying, mentally copying, treasuring up whatever was expressive, or grand, or peculiar, and then hastening to reproduce it in some work. A face full of character, a head of unusual or dignified aspect, a strange attitude, fun, frolic, grief, rage, violence,—all



were seized by the skilful student, all treasured up, and all employed as occasion arose. One of Leonardo's biographers tells us that he attended a supper to which the painter had invited a number of peasants, whom he highly amused and prompted to laugh immoderately as well as display extravagant contortions; all with a view to embody their exhibition in sketches, and this he did with such effect that the whole was irresistibly comic.\* In addition to all this, Da Vinci would follow criminals on the way to execution, that he might study their expressions, and eventually transfer them to canvas. In a word, if this man be on the way to preëminence, even his amazing powers did not enable him to reach it by a bound; nay, he mounted step by step, just as he must have climbed an Alp or advanced in a long day's journey. Indeed, his course of study, planned and long followed out, was both so extensive and so minute that only a buoyant genius resolved to be daunted by no difficulty could have successfully carried it out.

By these, then, and similar measures, did

\* There is in the British Museum a volume of such drawings by Leonardo. It contains portraits, caricatures, tilting, horses, and a variety of other subjects in different departments, illustrated by manuscript notes.

this mere stripling lay the foundation for excellence. And in sentences already quoted we have seen what excellence he achieved. It is no part of our design to criticise his productions, or to show how, in some respects, he rivalled Raphael himself. Even the wondrous painting of the Last Supper, regarding which perhaps more has been written than about any other painting, we do not attempt to describe. Enough that in his chosen profession Leonardo da Vinci takes his place among the very foremost, while in many respects he had no rival, no second, in his own time or since. Some of his inventions, indeed, appear to be mythical. For example, when at Florence he constructed or planned a machine, by which he said, in the spirit of Archimedes, that he could raise the Church of St. John in that city from the ground in one mass, so as to admit of the edifice being under-propped without injury to its parts. And what is perhaps more wonderful—so persuasive were his words, and such his spell-like power over men, that while he spoke the undertaking seemed feasible. Only when his audience got beyond the reach of the eloquent artist's voice could they see that such a

thing was impossible by any power that man could apply. Yet the very biographer, Giorgio Vasari, who has narrated that trait, has added that "Leonardo was in all things so highly favoured by nature, that to whatever he turned his thoughts, mind, and spirit, he gave proof in all of such admirable power and perfection that whatever he did bore an impress of harmony, truthfulness, goodness, sweetness, and grace, wherein no other man could ever equal him." It is recorded regarding him, that in natural philosophy he never was satisfied till he had proved his proposition by experiment; and with that before us we may wonder what experiment proved his ability to upheave St. John's.

But the proposal to raise the Church of St. John from the ground was not the only project of Da Vinci which could not be accomplished. Some of his works in art were planned on a scale so colossal that it was impossible to embody them in permanent forms. One of these would have required one hundred thousand pounds weight of bronze. The very grandeur of his conceptions thus frustrated their realization; and his admirers do not fail

to tell that while he perpetually sought to add excellence to excellence and perfection to perfection, he was at each successive stage often rendering his plans less likely ever to be completed. He had studied, he had laboured, he had visited city after city, and kingdom after kingdom, to mature his mind, and acquire all varied accomplishments. But when he tried to be practical, he found that there was a limit, often a narrow one, to human power; and some of the grand ideas of Leonardo da Vinci never escaped from the region of the ideal. While he wrought, it was often so slowly that ordinary minds chid his delay; but he was slow because the conception in his mind refused to appear upon the canvas,—it was genius picturing but not able to embody.

To indicate more plainly how the wondrous boy, whose painting made his master abjure his pencil for ever, grew into the man, it may suffice to allude to some of the wonders which Leonardo undertook to accomplish. Writing to Ludovico, Duke of Milan, in 1483,—that is, when the artist was only thirty-one years of age,—he engages to construct light pon-

toons for flight or pursuit in war, and also to destroy those of the enemy; to draw off the water from fosses during a siege, and supply all kinds of engines for the leaguer; to destroy any fortress, not founded on rock, without the aid of bombardment; to strike terror into the enemy by a species of bomb which he describes; to run mines under the ditches of fortifications, or even under rivers, so as to reach any point desired in the interior of a place; to construct covered waggons "secure and indestructible," to be driven among the enemy, and sufficient to destroy the strongest bodies of men; to form bombs, mortars, and field-pieces, entirely different from those in common use; to prepare other engines of offence where these cannot be used. For sea-fights he was prepared to construct vessels that would be able to resist the most powerful bombs, and employ "vapours" for the offence of the enemy. In times of peace, he promised plans for public and private buildings, and to conduct water from place to place. Sculpture in marble, bronze, or terra cotta, he also undertakes. And to complete what seems to have been designed as a kind of challenge,

Da Vinci says: "If any of these shall seem to any man impossible or impracticable, I am perfectly ready to make trial of them . . . in whatever place you shall be pleased to command. . . ." Leonardo at least believed in himself; his biographers evince no incredulity; and his treatise on hydraulics still remaining, as well as works, printed and in manuscript, upon subjects more connected with his profession, attest beyond a doubt the versatility, the wide range, and the amazing penetration of this man's mind.

And as a man his friends clung to him with admirable fondness. He encountered slights from Pope Leo X. When pitted in advanced life against the rising fame of Michael Angelo, Da Vinci disliked the competition; but the qualities of his heart are as loudly praised as are the works of his hands. With a generous liberality he extended shelter and hospitality to every friend who needed his aid. Admiring excellence, and living for it, he rejoiced over talent wherever he found it. Even the lower animals shared his sympathy and his heart, for he sometimes bought birds in the market-place just to have the joy of setting

them at liberty. Though he was the companion of princes, nay, though he is said, though apparently without truth, to have died in the arms of Francis I. of France, he did not refuse to associate even with the poor when they were worthy. At first his own means were scanty, but as his resources increased his heart enlarged, and his whole style of life was in keeping with that of the man whose conceptions were so grand that they often could not be embodied, or so beauteous that they could not be surpassed. Some of his productions are placed side by side with those of Titian.

From all the Biographies of Da Vinci we can learn little regarding his religion. Towards his close a case is made out of professed penitence, even to tears, for long neglect; and such ceremonies as Rome knows how to employ to opiate conscience were employed in his case; but the veil is thick, and we have not found the means of raising it. We are consequently compelled to speak of him mainly in regard to this world, and eminence here. His example shows again what can be achieved by painstaking and persistent endeavour.

Starting from a basis of unquestionable genius, but in common life, he soared, and built, and planned, and constructed, till nature, through many a department, became tributary to his power. We may not have the same gifts, but we may, we *should*, have the same perseverance,—and with that success is sure, even in our distempered world.

It may well be supposed that the death of Leonardo, which took place at Fontainebleau, on the 2nd of May 1519, would occasion deep grief to thousands. It is believed that his health had been impaired and that he was rendered prematurely aged in appearance by his severe and protracted studies and labours—he was reckoned nearly eighty when he was only sixty-seven. We have seen that he was the companion of princes; and he was retained as architect and engineer by Pope Alexander VI. He founded an Academy for Art at Milan, under the powerful family of Sforza, and in many ways promoted the welfare, as he was the chief glory, of his country. These things, then, together with his works, endeared himself and embalmed his memory to many. And though collisions or envy drove



him from Rome to France, that did not mar his fame. By the King of that country he was courteously and honourably received; and certainly he deserved it all. To have anticipated what made Galileo, Kepler, and others illustrious—namely, the Copernican System—and to have briefly sketched some of the theories of modern geology in a way “which strikes us with something like the awe of preternatural knowledge,” was surely enough to render any man illustrious. It more than rewarded any amount of youthful toil; and such preëminence, Hallam says, belonged to Leonardo da Vinci.





## II

### Blaise Pascal.

**A**S the world grows older, it seems to grow less and less likely that any "mute, inglorious Milton," should steal through life unnoticed; or that any "Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood," should not find an arena on which to act. There is so much in the world's condition now to develop the latent and uncover the obscure, that whatever powers a man possesses will find an outlet, or force one. Self-made men are becoming more numerous in every successive generation; and while mere conventionalities, in certain circles, seem to be reducing all to a common level, or withering men away, in others, the openings which are made for elasticity of mind insure preëminence to all who deserve to be preëminent. It may be in engineering, like George Stephenson. It may

be in literature, like Hugh Miller. It may be in the mere amassing of wealth, like many a millionaire. It may be in doing good, like John Pounds. But whatever be the sphere, openings abound. In its progress towards its destiny, the world and its inhabitants are passing into new conditions as surely as the globe revolves upon its axis. *The man is gradually becoming of more importance than the circumstances.*

Our next study leads us to the contemplation of one who ranks among the greatest of the sons of men, and who took his place in spite of barriers interposed. BLAISE PASCAL was born at Clermont, in the province of Auvergne in France, on the 19th of June 1623. His grandfather and his father were both employed by the Government of their day. The former is called a Treasurer of France; and the latter, Stephen Pascal, was President of the Court of Aids in Auvergne. The family was ennobled by Louis XI.—Blaise has been called one of the highest names, not only in the annals of France, but of the human race.

When he was only three years of age he lost his mother. Her name was Antoinette

Begon, but little is recorded regarding her except that she had four children—two sons and two daughters. The eldest boy died in infancy, so that Blaise was like an only son; and on the death of Antoinette, his father resolved to retire from public employment and devote himself entirely to the child's education. His main attention was directed to the culture of the mind rather than of the heart, and as Stephen Pascal was addicted to scientific pursuits, he was early made glad by proofs of precocious ability in his surviving boy. Having surrendered his office in Auvergne to a brother, he removed to Paris when Blaise was in his eighth year, there to prosecute without distraction his self-imposed task—the culture of the child. According to the method thus adopted, the parent was the sole teacher; so that whatever the boy became, no portion of his ability or acquirements can be traced to the training of the schools. In truth, that kind of home education which thoughtful minds often strike out, is, perhaps, more conducive to the development of what is original than our usual scholastic plans. It was so, at least, with Blaise Pascal.

His father was a proficient in mathematical science, and hoped to see his boy the same. In his early years, however, the child was kept carefully aloof from such studies, and had his attention turned rather to the general culture of his mind than to the indulgence or the fostering of any peculiar tendency. All facts, the reasons of things, wonders in nature, —whatever, in short, could arrest a child's notice, and draw forth his reasoning powers, the father of Blaise Pascal placed under his notice; but mathematics were carefully excluded. While the mind was placed as in a hot-bed regarding other things, it was chilled or repressed in regard to what proved, after all, one of its master pursuits in life. The exact sciences, with all their secrets, were as good as sealed against the boy, till, according to his father's theory, the young mind should become mature enough to comprehend them, or study them to advantage. Books bearing on these sciences were rigidly withheld. They were not even spoken of in presence of the boy. He was taught that they were, in the meantime, interdicted subjects for him.

But all this was vain. There was some-

thing in that boy's mind which must be out. There were longings, tendencies, deep desires, which could not be resisted. He had work to do, and instinct cried, "Let me do it." He implored his father to permit him to begin the study of mathematics; but his appeal was in vain. Blaise was now about twelve years of age, but all he could obtain was the promise that that study would be open to him as a reward for diligence in his present pursuits—the study of languages and general learning. In the meantime, however, he had acquired some vague idea of the nature of mathematics, or, at least, of the objects at which they aimed; and boy as he was he set himself to elaborate a system of mathematics for himself. He shut himself up in a room which was granted to him as a place of amusement, and began a series of rude but wonderful experiments, to guide him to some acquaintance with the coveted but forbidden science. He covered the floor with figures drawn in charcoal—squares, triangles, circles, and other mathematical forms. He did not know even the name for a circle, but called it a "round;" or of a line, but called it a "bar." Yet in

that state of ignorance, he groped, or rather reasoned his way to the conclusions of one of Euclid's propositions, and indicated clearly what talents he possessed.

When Stephen Pascal happened to enter the play-room of his son, and saw what formed his pastime, his surprise may be imagined. The boy was confounded when detected in the act of disobeying his father's prohibition; but that father, it is said, wept in deep emotion over the discovery which he had made. Blaise explained the stages by which he had wrought his way through various demonstrations by means of his "bar" and "rounds," and such rude helps as a boy could fabricate; and it will easily be believed that every barrier and all restrictions were now withdrawn from the path of the boy mathematician. He was encouraged and helped in his studies by his admiring tutor, his father, and we shall forthwith see with what results.

As Stephen Pascal, the father, had an extensive acquaintance with scientific men, the conversations at his house were often well fitted to arrest so inquisitive a mind as that of Blaise. From some hints which he caught,

it is said that in his eleventh year he wrote a short treatise upon Sound. It was this that had led to the prohibition of mathematics, and to silence regarding them in his home—a silence for which the boy was inconsolable. The discovery, however, of his diagrams, his "rounds" and "bars," necessitated the removal of the prohibition, and he was left at full liberty to follow where his genius led.

And the boy followed with celerity. In a short time he occupied a distinguished position among the mathematicians of his day. What was rudimental he easily mastered, and the soaring mind of a lad whom Bayle pronounced "one of the sublimest geniuses that the world ever produced," speedily rose so high that while only about sixteen years of age, young Pascal was admitted a member of a Parisian society for the cultivation of mathematics. Even before that age he had composed a short treatise on Conic Sections,—not the least difficult portion of applied mathematics; and so meritorious was the work of that stripling that another distinguished French philosopher, Descartes, persisted in ascribing it to the elder Pascal, in spite of his solemn



disclaimer. It has been said of this young man that "his discoveries even in youth would have intoxicated many men to madness"—while he remained humble, calm, and unconscious of any peculiar power.

Stephen Pascal was appointed by the French Government to an office in Rouen. This took place in the year 1641, and as some of the duties connected with that office, involving long calculations, were devolved upon Blaise, he invented a calculating machine, to abridge his labour and economize his time. In the invention and construction of that machine he evinced a marvellous ingenuity, and an amount of perseverance scarcely to be expected in one who was still only a lad. But he knew that "the gods sell all things to man for labour," and Blaise Pascal was one of those who acted betimes on that maxim. The machine cost him two years of rarely intermitted labour, and though it has been surpassed in more recent times by similar machines, that does not diminish our admiration of the untiring assiduity of this illustrious youth.

But still more delicate engagements now engrossed his mind. Why does mercury rise

and fall in a tube in certain conditions? That was a question which was then much agitated; and the received answer was, that Nature abhors a vacuum, therefore the fluid ascends. No valid answer was given, however, to the question, Why does the fluid stop at a certain elevation? Does the abhorrence of Nature not extend higher than a few inches, or a few feet, as the case may be? A mind like that of Blaise Pascal could not be satisfied with such reasonings, and he set himself to prove the true cause of the rising of the mercury in a tube. By experiments which could not be gainsaid, he established the real cause,—namely, the weight of the atmosphere pressing on the mercury. Torricelli, the original discoverer, had died before his proofs were completed; but young Pascal perfected the demonstration, and so took his place, young as he was, among the undoubted philosophers of his day.

He may now be regarded, then, as having entered upon manhood; but he also enters upon much more. It was at Rouen that the Pascals then resided, and while there a change came over the youth which affected all his

future. He had already, it is believed, so tasked his strength by study, by amassing knowledge, and eagerly pursuing the objects in which he was interested, that even in his eighteenth year his failing health betokened the effects of excessive mental exertion. The nerve-matter was overworked by the immortal occupant of his bodily frame, and symptoms of disease appeared which increased with growing years, insomuch that he often had occasion to say that from that date,—his eighteenth year,—he had never enjoyed a day of entire exemption from pain. Such was the price which he paid for eminence. But as his earthly father's training had led him to the knowledge of things which are seen and temporal, his heavenly Father now began to instruct him in a yet higher science, and it soon appeared in this youth's case that "none teacheth like God." Paralysis had attacked the young man's frame, yet so devoted, so intense was his love of science, that he actually gave himself up to the profound study of mathematics to soothe and calm his spirit when agitated by the violence of his pain! It was heroism—it was the very most that Nature

could do in such a case; but he was soon to know a more excellent way, and discover a more abiding solace.

Pascal has been compared to a young Grecian wrestler, the perfection at once of physical beauty and physical strength; and as the result of such high mental endowments as his, the discoveries which he made are likened to a kind of inspiration. Profound in themselves, they were thrown off by him without effort. That they cost him much, we know—his health broke down under the strain of his thought; but so graceful and attractive are his accounts of his discoveries, that those who can follow him in his soarings tell that they seem to have been revealed without the throes which some discoverers have endured. Wonderful attainments, surely, in one who was still but a young man!

Though all was morally correct and exemplary in the house of Stephen Pascal, it does not appear that he gave that prominence to "the Truth" which is its due. Absorbed in science, he, like many more, made that only second which God makes first. But influences which need not be described were at work

in his family, and Blaise was led thereby to adopt that system of truth which has been revealed to guide man back to God. He soon discovered that high as scientific studies rank, there are many things in heaven and earth which transcend them far; and the young devotee of science was now as eager in the pursuit of salvation. He became the instructor of those who would listen to his lessons. The father was now in his turn the pupil of the son; for the high culture and the great attainments made by Blaise Pascal as a boy and a youth came into full play regarding the things of eternity and the soul. His memory was so great that he is said never to have forgotten anything that he had learned; so that he became one of a thousand as a counsellor and guide, and now most of all in regard to what relates to the coming glory of eternity.

But the high mental culture which Blaise Pascal had acquired in boyhood and youth, and the knowledge which he had collected, were to be turned to further account in manhood. Circumstances arose which brought him into collision with the Jesuits, then at the height of their dark domination in France

and elsewhere; and with such power, such skill, such brilliance yet solidity, such wit, such penetration and effect did he assail their hated system, that the fraternity was at length and for a time expelled from nearly every kingdom in Europe. Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, designed to expose the corruptions of Jesuitism, became a French classic, and more, it helped to free the nations from a terrible incubus which pressed morality out of them, and corrupted religion till only the name of it remained. If ever it was true that we can connect the achievements of the man with the acquirements or the gifts of the boy, the case before us shows the important dependence of the one upon the other. By the production just referred to Pascal took his place among the most gifted men of his day, in religion, as he had formerly done in science; and posterity to this hour continues to award to him a palm, as one of the most accomplished writers of all time. Some of his "Letters" are deemed as eloquent as the Orations of Demosthenes or the Homilies of Chrysostom.

Nor was that his only contribution to the cause of truth. His *Thoughts* form one of

the most wondrous monuments ever reared by a mortal to himself, and in their own department are a befitting sequel to the doings of the boy who thought out for himself some of the truths of Euclid without even knowing how to name them. Of these fragments—they are scarcely even that—it has been said, that, out of Shakespeare and Bacon, nothing is known which will bear comparison with them, in depth, subtlety, and comprehensiveness. The mathematical boy has grown up to be the marvellous man, and originality as well as a grace peculiarly his own signalizes his productions. As thought after thought rose up to his mind, sometimes during sleepless nights, or in the intervals between paroxysms of pain, he wrote them down; and they remain, even in their fragmentary forms, a noble treasury for the defence of our faith. Pascal went down to the depths of man's soul, and rose to the heights of man's soaring, meeting every want, and that with such power that the yearning soul feels, this is truth or nothing is. All this was done while the state of his health debarred him from continuous exertion: and when the mere materials collected for the

fabric are so exquisite and precious, how majestic would the structure have been had his master hand been permitted to rear it ! With the Redeemer for the central attraction for his own soul, Pascal has helped to make him the same to thousands.

The four years of this wonderful man's life just prior to his departure formed merely a continuous epoch of bodily suffering. He was incapable of much mental exertion now, but he had risen into the still higher region of devotion. He had walked with God, and lofty as had been his early pursuits, those of his maturity are grander still, as the Eternal and the Infinite transcend the transient and the finite. In sickness and in solitude this unsurpassed mathematician, this victorious assailant of corruption, this defender of the faith, might be shut out from many of the delights of his youth, but others had come in their stead which brought foretastes of those which are for evermore, and Blaise Pascal moved forward to his appointed place among the true immortals. While here, he moved among men like a summer cloud dropping moisture on the parched earth as it flits along



the sky. It is said of him that he actually beggared himself by his charities, and mortgaged even his expectancies that he might have enough to give away.


It is the policy of unbelief to allege that the more gifted minds have not bowed in submission to the Redeemer's lessons till they were weakened by sickness or decay. This was said of Newton, and it was alleged also of Pascal. But, happily, a circumstance occurred during his intense sufferings, and towards his close, which refutes the charge. His genius, it has been said, even then blazed up in all its splendour: the boy who had covered the floor of his chamber with diagrams in charcoal, is, as a man, decorating his very tomb with still nobler tokens of his mental power. His nights were nearly sleepless through pain; and during one of these protracted agonies, in the year 1659, he entered upon a train of profound meditation regarding the properties of the Cycloid—a recondite mathematical subject, which it would take long indeed to explain.\* Certain

\* A Cycloid is a geometrical curve on which depends the doctrine of pendulums.

problems were evolved by Pascal during his sufferings, but he was long reluctant to make them public. His friends, however, prevailed by their entreaties; and the method which he adopted to make them known was characteristic. He offered the problems to the world of science for solution, promising a first and second prize to those who should be judged successful. Three months were allotted for the competition; and the unknown author of the proposal was to propound his own solutions, if none appeared prior to the lapse of that period. Several were sent in, but none of them fully met the proposed conditions; and Pascal then gave the solution. Such was the ardour, almost the vehemence, of one who now felt that time could ill be spared for such pursuits, that he prepared a treatise on the subject for the press in a few days; "and the world of science was again astonished at the appearance . . . of a work which equalled, if it did not surpass, all the former efforts of his mathematical powers."

The study of mathematics is often recommended as a means of bracing the reasoning powers—and with truth. The mind is there-

by enabled to advance with a firm step, proving as it proceeds, and challenging all gainsayers. It often happens, however, that they who have been thus trained blunder like other men, or even worse, when they reason upon subjects which do not admit of absolute demonstration. If La Place, for example, was an Atheist, as many have averred, his profound knowledge of mathematics had darkened instead of bracing his reasoning powers;—and so of many besides. Pascal, however, escaped that damage. Profound and soaring as he was—walking with Galileo and Torricelli, and even with Newton, in the fields of pure science—he was not less steadfast in what was moral or spiritual. And where shall Reason seek her noblest topics, her richest enjoyment? In the creature, or in the Creator? In matter, or in that God who is a spirit? In the interests of a transient scene, or in the glories of Eternity? Every sane mind is ready with a reply; and Pascal gave his response with the fervour of a reverent and the power of a transcendent mind. Not despising the seen and the temporal—nay, investigating their profoundest laws—he yet



preferred at last the heavenly to the earthly, the divine to the human: and was he not wise?

But the closing moments of this remarkable man were fast approaching. His sufferings were intense, but his patience was in proportion. He knew where to apply for a balm. He applied, and was not sent empty away. His last words were both humble and earnest: "Forsake me not, O my God!" And so passed away one of the most gifted men of all time;—an expounder of Nature's laws; a good soldier of Jesus Christ in repelling the enemies of truth; and, high above all his other qualifications (that which made him what he has been for two centuries and more)—a humble believer in the Son of God. Pascal died on the 19th of August 1662, when he had lived just nine-and-thirty years. His monument tells that "if piety never dies, his memory will be immortal." "Possessing unbounded intellectual power, . . . the orator admired in him a model of eloquence, the critic confessed the most elegant of writers, the scientific the profoundest of mathematicians . . ." But though no eulogy can tell

all that he was as a burning and a shining light, our superficial glance at his grand character tells us how great God can make a weak mortal, and what great things God can do by him.

It is painful, however, to have to notice that even this great man was not proof against human error or the wasting power of superstition. Trained as he had been in a Popish country, and living a member of the Popish Church, he was the victim of some of the dark deceptions of that system. For example, wasted and agonized as he was by disease and pain, he did not reckon what God had appointed enough for him to suffer. In addition to his other pains, he wore a belt with spikes in it round his waist; and as he deemed it sinful to enjoy pleasure here below, when any such feelings were experienced he would strike the belt with his elbow, that the pain produced by the spikes might be as an antidote to the pleasure—shall we say, atone for the sin of being happy? “I can approve only of those who seek in tears for happiness,” —“disease is the natural state of Christians,” said the great Pascal; for even his mind

was perverted by the dismal faith in which he had been trained.

It is further recorded, that while his sisters tended the poor invalid with such affection as sisters only can feel, Pascal treated them with unkindness, or repelled their tenderness, lest it should interfere with the love due only to God. Oh, how Satanic that system must be which could thus sour or pervert a nature so noble! How sad to think that even this "sublimest genius" sank into drivelling weakness when it misunderstood the truth of Scripture which tells that "by one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"! No need of self-inflicted torture; no need of supplementary atonements; no need of human aid in accomplishing what is already "finished" and "complete." The perception of that completeness would at once have emancipated this noble spirit from its self excruciation, its self-righteous attempt to do what the Son of God had done, in the eternal purpose, before the world began.

But one incident in the life of Pascal may be mentioned, as explaining, in part, these dark aberrations, or as deepening the darkness

by some additional shades:—In the year 1654, as a shattered invalid, he was taking an airing, in the neighbourhood of Paris, in a chariot drawn by four horses, and had occasion to cross the Seine by a bridge at Neuilly. Part of the parapet was broken down: the two leading horses took fright, and plunged into the stream. Happily the traces were broken by their weight, so that the horses alone were precipitated into the river, the carriage remaining on the bridge. But Pascal fainted away, and such was the shock which his nervous system received that it greatly augmented his ailments. For some time he could not rest: he was haunted by fear night and day. He saw precipices by his bed-side, over which he felt as if falling; and while the feelings which arose out of his escape hastened or increased his separation from the world which he now ceased to relish, it is possible that a mind so delicately constructed as his, so feminine and so sensitive, submitted amid his anguish to austerities which he might otherwise have spurned. But be that as it may, we have just surveyed the career of one of the grandest

minds which grace or genius ever ennobled. On one side it was weak, for it was the mind of a man ; but on the other side it was mighty—mighty in the truth, mighty in the wisdom which comes from above, and well fitted to be a help to all who would so spend their youth as to render manhood a blessing.

But to close. Is there any means of accounting for the preëminence of this man? Have we a key to open the mystery of his power? No doubt his gifts from the Creator were signal. Pascal was designed for a great work, and was endowed with great power to do it. But that does not explain all. The self-culture of the youth was as remarkable as the acquirements of the man. We get a glimpse of his painstaking when we are told that some of his "Letters" cost him the labour, the correction, and the re-writing of twenty days. His excellence was arrived at by toil ; and though we feel, while we read his writings, that all is simple, natural, and without strain, that is only because Pascal had so *thought* what he presents that it is made as clear as a colloquial remark. In truth, if ever there was a case which proved



that eminence is the result of well-directed endeavour, and that the dream of reaching excellence by some happy bound, some royal road, is *only* a dream—it is the case of Blaise Pascal. Power and goodness met in his spirit in a marvellous combination, and each was largely the result of persistent self-culture, from the dawning of thought to the margin of the grave.





### III.

## Alexander Pope.

**A**LLEXANDER POPE occupies an elevated niche among those who have enriched the literature of this country; and his name has been often a watch-word for warfare between contending parties—one section upholding his productions as perfect of their kind, another questioning whether they were to be regarded as poetry at all. But without entering far into such contentions, we may find not a little in his life to show by one example more how the boy makes the man, as the foundation of a building determines its character for stability or the reverse. Both the good and the ill which are in our nature are illustrated here.

POPE was born in the year of the great Revolution, 1688 ; but the day and the place, like many other things in his life, have fur-

nished materials for much discussion. Was it on the 21st of May or the 22nd, or on the 1st of January, or some day different from all the three? Was it in Lombard Street, according to Dr. Warton; or in Cheapside, according to another authority; or in the Strand, according to a third? Was his father descended from a noble family—that of the Earl of Downe—or was he ignoble and obscure, as nobility itself has alleged? This much, at least, is certain: Pope's father acquired a competency as a linen merchant, while the son was most probably born in Lombard Street, though it is not necessary for our present purpose to prosecute such an investigation farther here.

From his birth, Alexander Pope was of a delicate constitution, and was remarkable in early infancy for the sweetness of his disposition. Nearly all his biographers, and they are not few, are careful to tell that his voice was so sweet that he was called "The little Nightingale;" and, indeed, from his infancy he was considered a prodigy. When he was seven or eight years of age he became fond of books, and from that date, to study or to

compose them became his ruling passion. His first writing was an imitation of printed letters, and through life he was distinguished for that peculiar penmanship. When he was about eight young Pope was placed under a Romish priest as his tutor—for his father had adopted the creed of Rome—and it was under that master, we read, that the boy was first initiated in poetry.

Regarding men who have become notable, it is not uncommon to record some hair-breadth escapes in infancy or youth. The world, for example, was nearly prevented from ever seeing "The Wealth of Nations;" for its author was carried off, when a child, by gipsies. A similar thing happened to Sir John Popham, who lived to be an eminent English judge; and young Pope had also his peril—less romantic, but as real. When a child he was gored by a vicious cow, and yet escaped without any serious injury, notwithstanding his feebleness and utter impotency to resist.

From Hampshire, where his first teacher resided, Pope was removed to a school near Manchester, and subsequently to one or more in London. He there occasionally frequented

the theatre, and formed a kind of play by uniting portions of Ogilby's Iliad by some lines of his own composition. His school-fellows and the gardener of the establishment acted the play. While at school near Manchester, he lampooned his master in a poem of about one hundred lines, and was flogged for his freedom; but he was speedily removed from such discipline by his doting mother.

This precocious satirist is careful to tell us that he "began writing verses farther back than he could well remember." Every one quotes his own words, that he "lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came;" and what was said of one of our best legislators was true, though in a different sense, regarding Pope—"He never was a child; he was a man even in petticoats." A little after he was twelve he began an epic poem, and wrote four books, containing about four thousand lines. It was imitative, and designed to condense in its single self the peculiar beauties of Milton, Cowley, and Spenser, in our language; of Homer in Greek; and Statius, Virgil, Ovid, and Claudian, in Latin. It was certainly a bold effort for a feeble and decrepit boy, and

there must have been shades of excellence in the production; for though he subsequently destroyed it, some of its couplets were embodied in future poems. It was about two years, he says, in hand. His application even then was indefatigable, and his attainments signal; though it must be borne in mind that such of his juvenile poems as were published did not see the light till he was about twenty, and were no doubt retouched and improved by his maturer mind.

When Pope was twelve or thirteen years of age he was removed to Windsor Forest, where his father had purchased a small estate; and there the boy continued for six or seven years in what he calls the "close pursuit of pleasure and of languages,"—his own tutor and guide. But these studies were varied by attempts at original composition, and the elder Pope assisted his son with his counsels and his criticisms. The lad, however, speedily distanced his parent. Even before this date the boy had written an ode on *Solitude*, and a paraphrase on some portions of Thomas à Kempis. The young satirist was then in his gentlest mood, and these poems indicate all

the affection and kindness of his young nature.

But the mood changed. His proneness to satire re-appeared ; and when only fourteen he wrote a poem of that class deemed remarkable for its ability. About the same period he was writing imitations of some of the English poets, which are placed by some critics above the early productions of Cowley, Milton, and Chatterton. As a versifier, it has been said, Pope was never a boy : he stamped himself on our literature at an age when most children are only learning grammar or groping for words.

Has the reader ever wandered in Windsor Forest as it now is ? Has he admired the goodly prospects which there greet the eye—as remarkable in their kind as those which are enjoyed among the Alps or the Apennines ? Has he lost himself amid the interminable glades, till, like a pilot at sea, he may have had to consult his compass in order to find a way of extrication ? Has he read Pope beneath those stately trees, some of which were long regarded by his admirers as sacred to his memory ? Then it is not difficult to fancy the inspiration of those deep recesses for such a

poem as that on *Solitude*, or *Windsor Forest*. Those resorts, in truth, were, in one sense, the nursery of Pope's mind. They gave a colour to many of his writings; and his memory would have been at least a purer thing had he never plunged into other scenes.

His youthful productions were characterized by nearly all that is peculiar to Pope's more mature writings. Condensed expression, often embodying terse thought, stinging satire, and yet worse, a fondness for the impure, are there apparent; in short, these things are the bud, and his future career is but its development. When he was about fourteen, one who casually met him predicted that he would "either be a madman or a very great poet;" and his impetuous pursuit of knowledge of a certain kind was perhaps the foundation of the prophecy. His incessant studies, one of his admiring biographers says, his impatience, and irritability, must often have made him appear wayward and capricious in the family circle, while yet he adds that young Pope's talents and affectionate disposition made him an object of idolatry.\*

\* De Quincey says, "He was the idol of the nation before he had completed his youth."



When in his sixteenth year this stripling was engaged upon his *Pastorals*. He had lived, he says, "like a boy gathering flowers in the fields and woods, just as they fell in his way ;" and many of these were employed to beautify his poetry. So intense was his application and so eager his endeavour to advance at this period, that disease was the result, and in despondency he lay down to die. His desire of excellence, from the age of twelve, had urged him onward in a plan of study which he had laid down after his removal from public seminaries ; and at the age of fourteen he had made such acquisitions, both as to public affairs and human life, as even Dr. Johnson confesses are not easily conceived to have been attainable at such an age. No doubt it is amusing to hear the boy confess that "he thought himself the greatest genius that ever was ;" but while we laugh at that egotism, we may concede that his industry, his perseverance, and his pursuit of all various knowledge, prove that he was indeed no "vulgar boy." How could he, when one of his admirers could write : "Pope, whilst yet only sixteen years of age, was caressed, and

even honoured." " Wits, courtiers, statesmen, grandees the most dignified, and men of fashion the most brilliant, all alike treated him not only with pointed kindness, but with a respect that seemed to acknowledge him as their intellectual superior." All that towards a self-taught lad—one whose education was like the wanderings of a brook at its own sweet will, rather than the scholasticism which England regards as one of its glories.

Brief as these notices of Pope's early boyhood are, they have brought us to what was in his case incipient manhood and maturity—the age of sixteen. His poems now began to attract attention ; and, stripling as he was, some of the titled in point of rank, and of the lauded in point of genius, became his associates or admirers ; they courted his society somewhat as he courted theirs—for all his life long Pope was a devotee to the great. Hitherto, as he has been described by one whose sentences will tell his name, Pope had been " indefatigably diligent and insatiably curious, wanting health for violent, and money for expensive pleasures ; and having excited in himself very strong desires of intellectual eminence, he spent

much of his time over his books ; but he read only to store his mind with facts and images, seizing all that his authors presented with undistinguishing voracity, and with an appetite for knowledge too eager to be nice." Now, by such discipline his mind became early ripe, and hence the ascendancy just mentioned ; but, in consequence of his eminence or ambition, he became the associate of some men whose society should rather have been shunned. They might be agreeable—like Cromwell, who appears to have been little else than an exhausted debauchee ; or like Wycherley, who was no better ; but to an ambitious youth of sixteen or seventeen they were like the match which fired the train : and however men may palliate or apologize for the habits which were in consequence formed, and never abandoned, Pope, as a mere lad, became a man of the world ; he caught the spirit of the reigning morality, low—not to say gross—as it was ; and it does not appear, after all that can be said in his defence, that he ever really rose above the level at which he started. He was still devoted to study, and still elaborating poetry such as will never entirely fade while

our tongue is spoken. He affected, however, to be gay, careless, and indolent ; and he made a mock at sin, or gloried in it. The companion of old and worn-out men of the world required to have something in common with his associates, and Pope at least wished them to believe that their habits and his were alike.

Reference has been made to Pope's *Pastorals*. They were the production of a self-taught lad of sixteen, and written in the recesses of Windsor Forest ; but they placed their author at once side by side with some of the famous men of his day. His elaborate study, his gathered stores, his exquisite culture of the harmony of verse, his bee-like industry and love of the beautiful, had begun to produce their natural results ; and had the moral standard been as pure as the poetical was high, the early life of this stripling would have yielded more unmingled pleasure. " I believe," said a sister of Pope, " nobody ever studied so hard as my brother did in his youth. He did nothing but write and read." And the saying is well warranted. But truth nevertheless compels us to confess that at this

early age he was busily engaged sowing the seeds which bore fruit so peculiarly in future years. Some of the levities of his youth are painful. Even then his thirst for fame was insatiable, and it continued to dominate in his nature till his closing days. No doubt the times were "unscrupulous;" and nearly all the men who helped to mould Pope's character were dissolute, profligate, unprincipled. But why were they his associates at all? Only because they were what he relished; and so he nurtured his own tendencies by the hot-bed in which he planted them. The perception of the beautiful and the good, and the pursuit of them—how often widely sundered!\*

Having thus fully entered on his life-career, then, and taken a place among men of that age who were unprincipled like Bolingbroke, and gross like Wycherley, what was the estimate formed of Pope by some of those who knew him best? One speaks of him as signalized by "low deceit." "Malignity," it is said, "was rampant in him." His "duplicity and falsehood" are not overlooked. His elevation

\* It is well-nigh as painful to read the palliations or defence of Pope's conduct, by some of his biographers, for example Roscoe, as it is to trace the career of the poet himself.

and success as a poet, the ample remuneration received for his translations, and other things,\* had raised him to such an elevation that he could ill brook a rival near his throne. With fretful anxiety, and a jealousy which is described as mean, he watched over his own supremacy. No right of challenge, scarcely even of dissent, was tolerated in another: so that his case exemplifies once more the baleful effects of power without holy principle to guide it; of great acquirements, the result of praiseworthy assiduities, but largely counteracted by a mean nature, in which the moral has not been cultivated side by side with the mental.

We have seen enough to show by what secret impulses this lad became what he was. His mind was at once adventurous and ambitious: "he longed without ceasing to advance, and never rose so high but that he wished to be higher;" always imagining something greater than he knew, and endeavouring more than he could do. Unwearied diligence; intercourse both with the living and the dead; studiousness so great that if a happy thought

\* The *Iliad* brought him more than £3310, and the *Odyssey* above £3685.

or expression, or even word occurred to him, he would jot it down for future use, and frequently awoke his attendant at night for that purpose; no fault ever passed uncorrected; no labour deemed too great; no finish too exquisite; no hasty publications, for some were kept for years beside him, and touched and retouched till he deemed them perfect; the counsels and criticisms of friends;—these were some, but only a few of the appliances employed by Pope to promote the excellence at which he aspired. It was sleepless industry ingrafted upon genius. Now, had everything in his life been as admirable as his assiduity, he would have been more of a model, and less of a beacon than, unhappily, he is. He would have been less exposed to the charge of a “low avarice of praise,” amid all his unquestioned power.

But one is almost afraid to record the strong opinions entertained by some regarding Alexander Pope. He has been called “a little affected hypocrite,” even in youth; and with all his glitter, or all his solid power, that character did not improve by age. Even as a stripling he wantonly provoked the rage

of men ; and, in retaliation, they recorded opinions which are surely sometimes to be received with caution. When he gave pain, and perhaps there never was an author who did so more pertinaciously or on a larger scale, he was compelled sometimes to shuffle, sometimes to deny, and sometimes to apologize to those whom he assaulted. In short, the irritable boy, " voracious of fame," grew up into a man who delighted to irritate and chafe all whom he chose to assail. He might weep, indeed, as one of his friends has said, " when reading very tender and melancholy subjects ;" but nevertheless, he could freely cast firebrands, arrows, and death around him. Even Roscoe likens him to a savage conqueror raising a trophy with the skulls of his enemies. The indefatigable youth, who had gathered knowledge from every available source, and beautified nearly all that he touched, has grown up into a man whose name is a power—not seldom a terror. Around him we have seen the titled, the wealthy, and even the royal gather ; so that, in spite of his " ambitious petulance," and all the drawbacks of a bodily deformity, or a peevish nature, he shone like



a star of wondrous brilliance among his fellow-men, till the desolation of his latter days drew on, and his love of stratagem, of mystification, and of strife died with him rather than was abandoned by him. He was once called "a portentous cub;" and we might indeed regard him as a portent, did we not understand that wondrous powers are no guarantee for moral grandeur. The description of him was just. He

"Made every vice and private folly known,  
In friend and foe—a *stranger to his own*."

Do these strong words call for proof? It is at hand. Pope printed his own letters, after having had recourse to false pretences to force on their publication: and not only so; he printed letters as addressed to Addison and other celebrities, which had previously been sent to a humbler friend. "To some letters he affixed great names, that he might render the correspondence attractive, and elevate his own social importance; while others were framed to suit some personal object, or carry out enmities, or commemorate friendships." Such meanness and such unprincipled procedure are to be stigmatized wherever they

appear, and certainly not least in one so intellectually gifted, so morally pretentious.\*

But Pope's sad words hasten to be realized. He once said, and is now to feel, that "life, after the first warm heats are over, is all down hill, and one almost wishes the journey's end, provided we were sure to lie down easy, whenever the night shall overtake us." We have said nothing of the religion of Pope: it was Romanism, and he adhered to it amid many discouragements, or even temptations to forsake it; while some admired him for his steadfastness, and others for his laxity in regard to it; some "for his prettyatheistical jests," and others for his belief in Revelation at a period when all that was solemn and serious was too generally laughed at. Neither has reference been made to his strong filial affections—his fondly clinging with great tenacity to his parents while living, and to their memory when dead. "There was no virtue," one of his biographers says, "which Pope did not desire his friends to believe that he possessed; but in truth this self-portraiture was a mere

\* De Quincey has ventured to say, "The moral character of Pope is of secondary interest; " but surely the words should be qualified.

mirage or delusion continued from habit." "It would be absurd," the same author continues, "to descant on his morality;" and even after the glimpse here given, there can be no doubt that the little idol of Twickenham was morally as low as he was poetically high. His model of female excellence, for example, was a mistress of the king; Bolingbroke the infidel he regarded "as the most transcendent of mortals." In truth, the farther we explore the poet's life, the more clear does it become that a boyhood such as his necessarily ends in a manhood that is gross, or low—an outrage on the decencies, an ignoring of much that man ought profoundly to admire.

"Doubt not to reap, if thou canst bear to plough." Pope ploughed; but in the view of eternity, and with the Bible open as our standard, he reaped but chaff. He died on the evening of Wednesday, the 30th of May, 1744; and passed away so gently that his attendants did not perceive the exact moment of his departure. It is in keeping with his own pretentious life to say that some wept beside his dying bed who afterwards became the eager assailants of his memory.

For the purposes of this volume, the life at which we have now merely glanced supplies two illustrations, each of them indicating that just as the twig is bent the tree is inclined.

First, Pope's unsurpassed assiduity in cultivating his poetical powers, even in boyhood, followed by the imperial position which he held among the leading minds of his age, may well lead to a corresponding culture, if we be wise indeed. He once said that to "follow poetry as one ought, he must forget father and mother, and cleave to it alone;" and he acted in spirit on his own maxim. "Give thyself wholly to these things," was by him applied to poetry, and excellence there. No criticism has been attempted upon his poems: some of them have long taken their place among the gems of our literature, and will keep that place while the language is understood. How could it be otherwise, when a critic so competent as De Quincey calls *The Rape of the Lock* "the most exquisite monument of playful fancy that universal literature offers"? But connecting that fact with his early assiduities—his straining after excellence, his painstaking and persistency, his eye ever

open to beauty, and his mind trained to express it in exquisite forms—we clearly see what culture, when it is added to mental power, can accomplish: and in this aspect, the boy Pope may be viewed as a guiding star for all future ages. “I am sure,” Sir T. F. Buxton once wrote to his son, “I am sure that a young man may be very much what he pleases;”—and the life whose early years and leading incidents have now been touched seems to verify the saying.

But, secondly, not less eloquent is the life of that boy and man in another point of view. As a moral being he was untaught in youth, and his manhood was too often a disgrace to the name which he affected—that of a moralist and a Christian. Even in his infancy, as Roscoe tells, Pope’s ruling passion was the love of fame. It dominated in boyhood, and in manhood, on to the edge of the grave; so that “it would scarcely be possible to point out a single incident in his life which does not bear some relation, either immediate or remote, to this pursuit.” Now, from such a passion what real good could result? Not more certainly do the stalk and the leaves and the blos-

soms and the seed of a flower rise from its roots, than did the mature life of this man emerge from his earlier years. His acrimony; his delight in giving pain; his actual and almost fiendish enjoyment of the wounds which he inflicted—for example, by the *Dunciad* and other poems; his meanness; his falsehoods; his grossness on some occasions, in contrast with his high pretensions upon others;—all manifest a moral lowness such as truth compels us to condemn, and compassion to deplore. One of Pope's favourite theories—the imperial ascendancy of some ruling passion in every soul of man—was vividly illustrated in his own case: from boyhood to manhood and the grave, he took pleasure in lampooning and paining, garnishing the whole with beauties which made his attempts so fascinating as to be perilous. Wherever such a life is brought to the test of the Divine and only standard, its beauty goes up like rottenness; its very excellencies but render it more and more to be shunned.

Such are, briefly, the lessons derivable from the life of Pope: they are, in truth, so magnified and so manifest, owing to his high posi-

tion, that they need only to be named. And let it be repeated,—with the word of God for our standard, is not Alexander Pope a beacon in some aspects, while in others he may well be a guide? His life *does* present a rare phenomenon, namely, that before he had reached his twenty-fifth year he had written and published nearly all the works on which his reputation now rests: and the study of such a case is laden with many lessons. But there is something higher, nobler, and more precious than fame,—immortality, such as Revelation, not man's breath, imparts; and viewed in regard to that, the life of this man, like the life of many of his contemporaries, was sad. One of his most popular couplets was this,—

“ For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight—  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right; ”

and in his “ Universal Prayer ” he puts the worship of Jehovah and Jove upon a level;\* that is, the eternal God and a pagan divinity may equally be worshipped, if men be sincere in the worship! Such was the

\* Pope's will contains the following clause:—“ I resign my soul to its Creator, in all humble hope of its future happiness, as in the disposal of a Being infinitely good.”—That is all from this *Christian*.

*religion* of this man ; and they who know how shallow, nay, how infidel, such sentiments are, will not wonder that he who held them led such a life, or displayed such a spirit as caused him to be called a " vile slanderer," a " rank, loathsome miscreant," guilty of " the grossest licentiousness." Such is genius without godliness.

As a sequel to this notice of a precocious poet, it may be observed that he is not the only one in the annals of our literature who wears that character. ABRAHAM COWLEY, who was born in the year 1618, and died in 1667, was still more precocious than Pope ; at least Cowley's youthful productions are better authenticated than some of those first published by the idol of Twickenham, for a volume of poems was published by the former in his thirteenth year according to some, in his fifteenth year according to others, while the juvenile productions of Pope were not printed for years after their composition, and were most probably improved. Among Cowley's there is a poem written when he was only ten years old, and another composed when he was twelve. While at school he composed a



comedy; and while at Cambridge, whither he was sent when he was about eighteen years of age, he wrote one of his poems, his  *Davideis*, of which Dr. Johnson says,—“The materials could not have been collected without the study of many years, but by a mind of the greatest vigour and activity.” With great assiduity Cowley continued from year to year to cultivate and to produce,—tossed and tumbled by the agitations of his times, but still pressing toward the mark for excellence in his art. He also, then, is a guide or a model, in so far as excellence depends upon effort, upon pains-taking and personal exertion. Some of his compositions have been said to stand “unrivalled and alone: such gaiety of fancy, such facility of expression, such varied similitudes,” and other charms need be sought in Cowley alone, so completely has the persevering boy shot up into the lauded man; and his epitaph was true:—

“ To him no author was unknown,  
Yet what he writ was all his own.”

And MILTON's is another name which is to be placed among those which were made famous

by precocity as well as power. At fifteen he translated some of the psalms, and the translations were published. Many of his elegies are believed to have been written in his eighteenth year. Other proofs of his early acquirements are recorded, and if these helped to train up Milton for the lofty position which he occupies in the higher minds of every land, no more need be said in the enforcement of our present subject. No doubt Cowley, Milton, and Pope were destined for greatness by Him who divides to one after this manner, and to another after that. Withal, however, their early devotedness to self-culture, and what Johnson calls their "vernal fertility," point us to the path which even the loftiest genius must tread if it would cultivate and mature the gift of God as God designed. Milton's assiduity was life-long, so was Pope's, and so must that of every mortal be who would rightly employ and prepare to account for what the Father of lights, the Author of every good and every perfect gift, has bestowed.





#### IV.

### Benjamin West.

**B**ENJAMIN WEST, a native of Pennsylvania in North America, was born on the 10th of October 1738, and was the youngest of ten children. Attempts have been made, and perhaps with success, to prove him to have been descended from the Lord Delaware who distinguished himself at the battle of Cressy; and Colonel West, another of his ancestors, was a companion in arms to John Hampden: but these martial tendencies were changed when the family became Quakers about the year 1667. In 1699 the Wests emigrated to America, though John, the father of Benjamin, did not join the rest till the year 1714. When he married he received a negro slave as part of the marriage portion of his wife; but even then the passionate and most praiseworthy

affection of the Friends for the slave made itself felt, and that negro was soon set free. Not only so, John West endeavoured to induce others to do as he had done; and after some formal discussions, it was resolved, "That it was the duty of Christians to give freedom to their slaves." As time rolled on, the resolution became still more explicit; for in 1753 it was decided that no one could belong to the Society of Friends "who held a human creature in slavery."

The birth of Benjamin West took place in peculiar circumstances. His mother had gone to hear a famous orator among the Quakers, whose ascendancy over his audiences was wonderful. He glowed, and flashed, and thundered, so that those who heard him were bowed down by terror, or melted into tears at his will. Such was the effect produced upon Mrs. West, that she gave birth in one of these assemblies to her tenth child, Benjamin. The meeting was of course broken up by an event so peculiar; and the depth of parental fondness was not needed to occasion hopes the most bright or find omens the most flattering regarding the future of one whose birth was so

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THE JUVENILE ARTIST

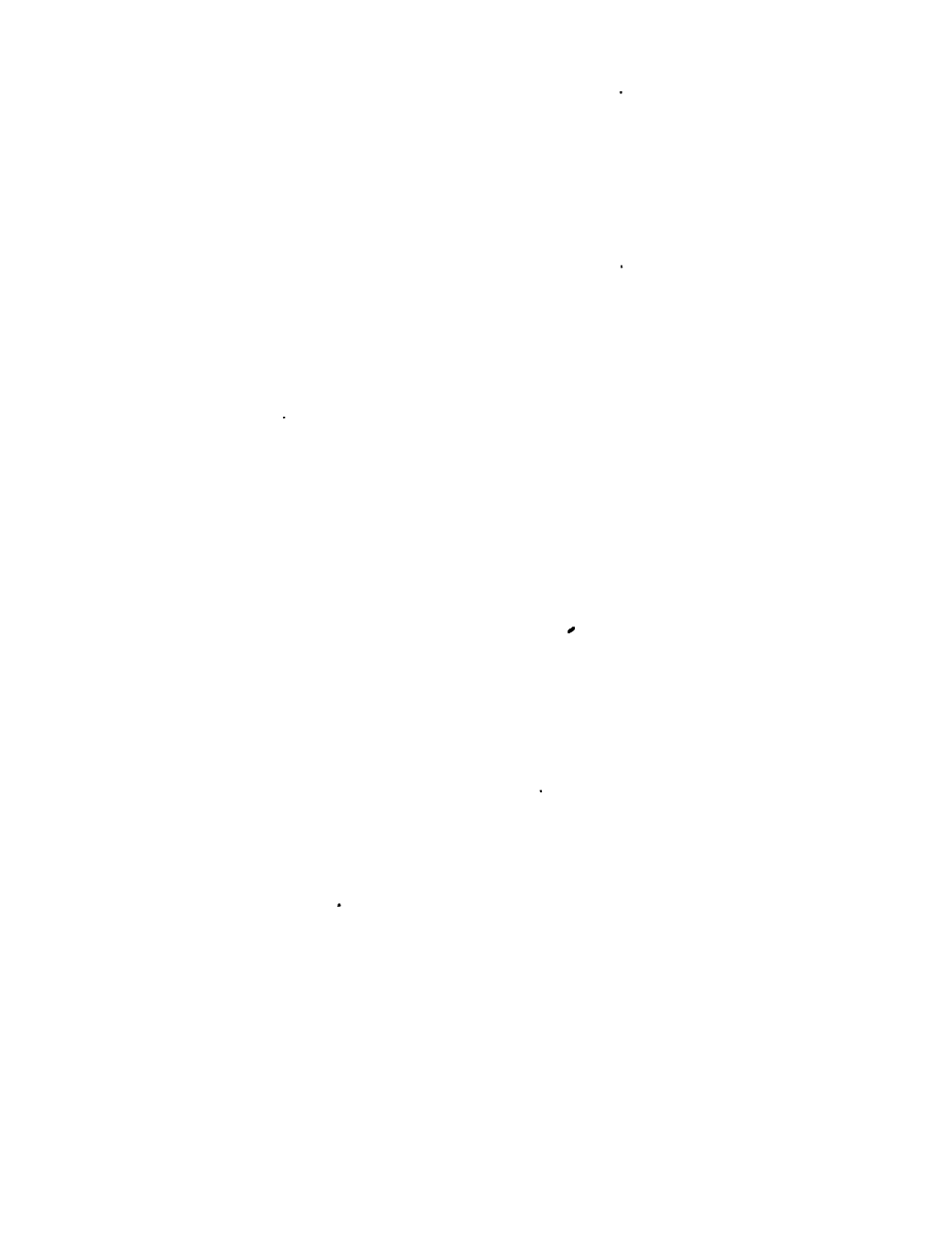
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peculiar. The preacher in his turn was now deeply impressed: he predicted that "a child sent into the world under such remarkable circumstances could prove no ordinary man, and charged the father to watch over the boy's character with the utmost degree of paternal solicitude."

Of the first six years of that child's life nothing is recorded to show that these presages and predictions were then fulfilled. But in the year 1745, when in his seventh year, Benjamin happened to be left for a little in charge of an infant relative, who was asleep in a cradle. That little charge smiled in sleep, and Benjamin was so struck with the beauty, that he procured paper, with black and red ink, and attempted a portrait of the sleeper. It is believed that up to that day he had never seen a picture or an engraving; but there was something stirring within the boy which pointed to his future, though none could then know it; and from that first portrait, the result of an infantine incident, West's friends and admirers date the commencement of that career which made him conspicuous in his day. He attempted to conceal the portrait











from his mother ; but when she saw it she at once recognized the likeness, fondly kissed her son, and drew forth an offer from him to "make pictures" of some flowers which she held in her hand. While such a feat by such a child indicates the force of the natural bent, it has also been hailed "as the birth of the fine arts in the New World." It now appeared that the prediction of the orator was about to be fulfilled—so a fond father and mother thought ; and it is at least certain that in few cases can the first forth-putting of genius, in art or any department, be so certainly connected with a particular incident. It has often been said that West was wont to explain his predilection for art by declaring that "his mother's kiss made him a painter ;" and whether that be fact or only fancy, the two things do stand closely related in the history of West.

Nor should we fail to notice here that this early preference, or this early display of power, becomes more remarkable in that child when we recall the state of society in general, and of the Quakers in particular, at the period now referred to. Pennsylvania was colonized by a

people whose life and manners were avowedly a protest against the dissoluteness and the grossness which prevailed in England under the Charleses and others ; and in subsequent times that spirit was paramount, at least among the Friends. They discountenanced all that could excite passion or pamper pride. Young West had therefore no stimulant from without. His predilection was a spring welling up in the wilderness ; it was a blossom blooming in the desert. The power whence it sprung was within ; for "in the whole compass of the Christian world no spot was apparently so unlikely to produce a painter as Pennsylvania,"\* and yet a painter Pennsylvania did produce—not, indeed, unrivalled, as was once believed, but yet of no mean order.

The boy was now allowed to employ some of his leisure hours in drawing with pen and ink—his only implements till a party of Indians visited Springfield, his home, and taught him to prepare the red and yellow colours with which they painted their own grotesque decorations. His mother added blue ; and, thus furnished, Benjamin entered

\* See "The Life and Studies of Benjamin West," by John Galt.

a new world. His tutors, the Indians, also taught him to shoot with the bow; so that he could always command birds for models when he advanced so far as to require them. His sketches at length began to attract attention. Happily his friends were influenced by the persuasion that he was "endowed by Heaven with a peculiar gift." He was, in consequence, encouraged rather than repressed in his boyish efforts. Nor was he without the need of aid. Some of his neighbours, when inspecting his workmanship, expressed a regret that he had no pencils. The boy naturally inquired what they were, and was told that they were small brushes made of camels' hair. A camel was not easy to find, but a cat was within reach, and from its tail he procured what served his purpose for a time—West's first pencil was actually made of that material! Gradually the tail was denuded: the father, with whom the cat was a favourite, complained: the young artist confessed that he was the spoiler, and was *not* punished. Michael Angelo, when a mere lad, modelled and drew in a style which surprised his master; Raphael, when not more than

nineteen, had become the rival of his instructor; but of neither of these is any incident recorded which so clearly evinces the fertility of invention as in the case of the little boy West.

His father was visited about this time by a Friend who could not but notice the drawings of birds and flowers which adorned the home at Springfield—a decoration quite uncommon in the house of a Quaker. To him they seemed wonderful productions, as executed by a boy just entering his eighth year; and the visitor promised to furnish the child-artist with a box of paints and a supply of pencils from his city home. He did so, and at the same time sent some pieces of canvas prepared for the easel, and some engravings which might serve as models. This has been called an era in the boy's life. He lived for some time in a flutter of joy: the box was his delight by day, his dream by night. But more than that: he retired to a garret, became absorbed in his work, forgot his school hours, and ventured to repeat that seclusion from day to day for the sake of his much-loved work. His master sent, at length, to





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inquire for the absentee; and only then was it discovered how the last few days had been employed. But the copies of the engravings which he had made so charmed his mother, that she at once, and with affection, forgave the truant; and not only so, but secured a pardon from the father and the master also. She would not, however, suffer the boy to finish the picture, lest he should spoil what seemed to her already perfect; and sixty-seven years after that incident, when the boy-painter had become a septuagenarian and more, he declared to one of his biographers that "there were inventive touches of art in this first and juvenile essay, which, with all his subsequent knowledge and experience, he had not been able to surpass."\* So surely in this case did the boy make the man.

We have already glanced at four different stages in the life of young West as a painter. First the portrait of his little niece; then the lessons of the Indians in the use of their bright colours; then the hair pencil; and, fourthly, the receipt of a box of paints along with some engravings. Each in succession

\* See Galt's "Life," chap. I.

gave a new expansion as well as additional force, to the youthful predilection; but we are now to notice a fifth stage in his progress. He has begun to do what he afterwards, in a presidential chair, counselled others to attempt,—“like the industrious bee, to survey the whole face of nature, and sip the sweets from every flower.” He was now invited to visit Philadelphia, and entered upon a new world there. “The imaginary spectacles of magic” are referred to, as describing the effects produced by what he saw. The sight of a painting excited him to an extent that arrested the notice of strangers; and fresh assurances reached his friends that “he was no common boy.” He began now to feel, as his mind expanded by reading, that “a painter is a companion for kings and emperors;” and though his youthful associates deemed him mad when talking thus in a land where neither kings nor emperors existed, young West was ready with a reply,—“They exist in other parts of the world;” and he continued to prosecute the object of his passion with something which approached the character of a *furor*. From the shop of a workman, as well as from the kind-

ness of friends, he obtained materials for indulging his predilection. From a cabinet-maker he begged some boards; painted figures upon them with ink, chalk, and charcoal; obtained a dollar for each board from a friend; and, thus furnished, he both obtained his first patron in art and was stimulated to persevere in his chosen path. The little artist was about the same time employed to paint the portraits of a family remarkable for their beauty; and such was his success, that his celebrity spread far and wide, while applications for portraits from his hands now became so numerous that scarcely could he meet them all.

But his aims were enlarging. On the suggestion of a friend, West already rose above portrait-painting, and betook himself to historical subjects. The Death of Socrates was selected for his first effort; and so successful was the young artist in that work, that it led to his removal for a time to Philadelphia, to promote his improvement at once in art and in learning. He was passionately enamoured of his profession, and his progress was in proportion. He actually re-invented the *camera obscura* to facilitate some of his studies, though he had

never heard of the existence of that instrument; and while considering these incidents in the life of this lad, we are apt to forget that he has not yet reached his sixteenth year. It now became necessary, however, that he should formally select a profession. His father grew anxious on the subject, and a meeting of the Society of Friends was held to consider what should be the career of this youth. "God has bestowed on him," said one of the speakers, "a genius for art; and can we believe that Omniscience bestows his gifts but for great purposes?" The appeal was not to be resisted. The assembly agreed to allow the youth to indulge the predilections of his genius, in spite of the Quakerly aversion to such pursuits; and, at a subsequent meeting, Benjamin formally received the sanction and the blessing of the Society. "I think the fine arts ordained by God for some great and holy purpose," was a sentiment uttered in that assembly; and, in the hope that the interests of fraternal love might be promoted, the lad received a license to be a painter. "The women rose and kissed the young artist; and the men, one by one, laid their hands on

his head and prayed that the Lord might verify in his life the value of the gift which had induced them, in despite of their religious tenets, to allow him to cultivate the faculties of his genius."

Thus stimulated and encouraged, young West pressed onward for honourable eminence in his chosen profession. But war between America and Britain was impending. Wayne, the companion in arms of Washington in that war, drilled West for a time as a soldier. He was subsequently chosen, Quaker as he was, to act as commandant to the boys of Lancaster, who formed themselves into a patriotic corps. He was recalled home, however, by the last illness of his mother; and the duties of the stripling soldier did not long conflict with those of the stripling artist. At Philadelphia his reputation as a portrait painter had rapidly spread. His youth and the peculiar incidents of his history attracted many to his studio, and his merits were everywhere acknowledged. His own mind, indeed, was always straining after an excellence which he was still far from reaching; but he was advancing. He began to long to visit the great

scenes of the fine arts in Europe, and husbanded his gains to enable him in due time to gratify his desires. Two guineas and a half for painting a head, and five for a half-length, did not form a golden remuneration, when tried by modern standards; but West's habits were simple, and Italy, with all its treasures, need not be regarded as indefinitely remote.

West's style is now taking a wider range, and portrait-painting is united to historical productions in such a manner as to mature his powers. To find paintings in America worth copying was then no easy task—but one or two were procured; and one so single in his aim and so persistent turned them at once to account. A farther expansion was given, both to his powers and his resources, by a visit to New York, where he resided for nearly a year. Though he did not find there all that he desired, he laboured with ardour, and was manifestly improving upon himself, and advancing to a position where he might claim a place among the foremost.

In the year 1759, when West was twenty years of age, an opportunity for his visiting Italy was presented. He had now collected

money enough to meet the expenses of the voyage and a short visit. Other circumstances favoured his proposal, and after a voyage involving some adventures, West reached Rome on the 10th of July 1760.

At this point, then, we may regard the boy or the youth as merged in the man; and on a retrospect of the first twenty years of West's life, it is manifest that never was there a more remarkable instance of an early choice dictated by inborn tendencies; never a more persistent prosecution of that choice when made; and never more notable success in the pursuit. Difficulties were surmounted or disappeared. Friends rose up to aid the child, the boy, the stripling, the youth; and now he is at Rome, the focus of the arts, there to revel and luxuriate amid all that can gladden artist life.

When West arrived at that capital, some of the leaders of taste could scarcely divine what an American would resemble. "Is he black or white?" was the inquiry of Cardinal Albani (who was blind), when told of the young American who had just arrived at Rome. On his first visit to the Vatican, West was met by about thirty of the most distinguished men



then in Rome, drawn together by their common anxiety to mark the effects which the Apollo, and other works of antiquity, would make on the young *savage*. When he compared that statue to a young Mohawk warrior the Roman connoisseurs were disappointed, till, through their interpreter, they learned from West the attributes and character of that tribe. Their disappointment then passed into admiration, and the youth took his place among them as a critic who could judge, though the standard was both exotic and unique. He admired, but not with the flimsy rapture of superficial minds; and ere he could catch or give expression to the beauty which was folded up in a statue or a painting, he would study and test for himself,—too lofty in mind to run in the ruts which guide vulgar visitants, and too profound in his sentiments to emit them in the hackneyed terms which we hear from hour to hour in the corridors and galleries of the Vatican.

His biographers, however, have been careful to record that it was not the Apollo, nor the stores of the Vatican, nor the gorgeous sensuousness of the Papal worship that affected,

this true man, so much as the terrible squalor that haunts the visitor in Rome. The wail, the implorings, the adjurations by every sacred name, employed by Roman beggars to extort relief, shook the sensitive Quaker to the core. Their clamours thrilled in his ears, we read, and smote upon his heart to such a degree, that at times he could scarcely stand. It was a part of his travelled experience for which he was little prepared; and all who have visited those scenes have witnessed, like him, the ineffable abundance of beggary.

As a wonder at Rome, West was put to many proofs by some of its artists, to test his ability as a painter. One of his paintings, privately executed, was exposed to criticism at a meeting where the artist's name was unknown. His work, however, was universally applauded, and he at once took his place side by side with some of the most famous painters then in Rome. Such were the results of his early devotedness, and his assiduous self-culture. From the very first he started abreast with some of the most accomplished artists even in the capital of art. He had, no doubt, much to learn, and he was not tardy in ad-

dressing himself to study; but the force of natural genius had carried him over not a few obstructions, as spring-tide lays regions under water which at other times are only dry sand-flats.

So intensely was West excited by what he witnessed at Rome, or by the study of its extraordinary treasures of art, that he was actually fevered. A consultation of physicians was held, and he was advised to quit the city without delay. He retired for a time to Leghorn, and after having somewhat recovered he returned to Rome. The same exciting objects, however, that had previously affected him, occasioned a relapse. His powerful imagination influenced his nervous system, the disease settled in his ankle, and for eleven months he was confined to his chamber and couch at Florence. "The restless ecstasy" in which he had lived in Rome was too much for his frame, and these sufferings formed part of the price he had to pay for excellence as a painter.

He had been advised when at Rome to visit Bologna, Parma, Venice, Genoa, and other places famous for their art-treasures; and as friends generally supplied him with the means,

West proceeded to those cities. He was now regarded in America as an honour to his country, and some Americans were forward to place at his command unlimited supplies for carrying out his studies; but on his return to Rome he finished some of his paintings, and then began to think of returning to America, taking Britain in his way. That proved the turning point in his history. At various places in Italy honours had been awarded to him for his works. The ardour of the boy and the devotedness of the youth thus brought to the man the rewards which await well-directed exertion. True, on a retrospect, Italy was to West in some respects a land of darkness. Everything there had fallen into a state of lamentable decay. Despotisms reigned supreme.\* Men, morals, governments, life public and private, all were corrupt. Everything appeared to him as in a state of disease, especially in what were called the States of the Church. "A few embers of intellect" might be seen here and there among the priests; but even their brightness was owing mainly to the blackness of death which reigned

\* See Galt's "Life of West," chap. viii.

around. The moral paralysis which he witnessed at Rome filled him for a while with indescribable anxiety, and all his young veneration for Roman majesty was lost amid the grossness of Roman life. In the north of Italy there were some redeeming traits; but, on the whole, Benjamin West, like Luther, and many more, turned away from Rome sick at heart on account of its immoralities. This is not the place to trace these to their fountain-head; but it may be remarked that it seems to be a general law that where public freedom is repressed by despotism private iniquity grows rampant. Man blames the reigning system, and sins without restraint.

Our artist travelled northward through France, everywhere studying, and treasuring up both mental stores and professional acquirements for future use. He reached England in the month of August 1763, when he was in his twenty-fifth year; and it soon became apparent there what the boy was to make of the man. He formed a friendship with Sir Joshua Reynolds, which lasted for life; he became acquainted with Johnson, Burke, and other celebrities of the day; and he of whom a

Roman Cardinal had lately asked whether the American, as a savage, was black or white, takes his place among the most gifted men of his age. It was not long till commissions poured in upon West. In the year 1765 he was married to an American lady. The Archbishop of York, of that day, became his friend, employed him as an artist, and led others to do the same: nor was that accomplished man's patronage misplaced, for West the man in London was as ardent and indefatigable as West the boy had been with his cat's-tail pencils and his Indian ochre. A noble offered him £700 a year to paint for the decoration of his mansion; but that sum was now no lure to West. He continued chiefly to paint portraits, till Archbishop Drummond induced him to enter on a different course, and, moreover, introduced him to the King. We may now regard him, then, as in the highway to all the favour that royalty can confer, and all the fortune that mortals need expect. West received commission after commission from royalty. The King became in some sense his personal friend, and their intercourse was sometimes such as is rarely

conceded by the crowned to the subject. Amid these engagements, West became one of the founders of the Royal Academy of Arts in London, in the year 1768: so that, wherever he went, he was spreading wholesome influences, fulfilling the prediction of the Quaker orator at his birth, and gathering not merely golden opinions but golden rewards with both his hands. The King gave him order after order. "Regulus Returning to Rome," the "Death of General Wolfe," and many other subjects, were suggested, and, of course, undertaken when majesty wished it. George III., perhaps under West's inspiration, became a devotee to the fine arts. West was appointed painter to the King, and even the American war did not disturb their intercourse. The painter had no relish for political cabals. He had little of the spirit of a partisan. Art was the beginning, the middle, and the end of his pursuits; and as he had now reached an elevation where his youthful days of labour and nights of study were to be amply rewarded, he was not to be lured away from his chosen path. In truth he lived wholly for it. In the year 1791 he was elected president of

the Royal Academy,—“a testimony of respect deservedly merited by the conduct and genius of the artist, who, when the compass, number, and variety of his pictures are considered, was at that period decidedly the greatest historical painter then living, who had been born a British subject.” He has thus reached the summit of an artist’s aspirations in regard to honour from man. But that neither cooled his ardour nor diminished his labour; for he now began, in lectures, to communicate to others the ripe results of his own experience and taste. His first discourse was delivered in December 1792; and unlike Raphael, who allowed himself to be enticed from his great pursuits by the attentions of the great, West continued still to work, and even to plod, as much as the truant boy had done in the garret at Springfield. Success was to him a stimulant, not a sedative. The man was only the boy enlarged. The year 1792 was a consistent sequel to the year 1742, when the infant artist was about to commence his life-work.

During the brief peace of Amiens, West hastened to Paris, where he was treated by official men with the courtesy which was his



due. But even there his attention was devoted to the works of art amassed by Bonaparte in the French capital, and his return to England was like a signal for a fresh start in his pursuit of excellence. His picture of *Christ Healing the Sick in the Temple* may be instanced as indicating both the comprehensiveness and the success of his aims.

As a specimen of that success, as far as fame and riches deserve that name, it may be mentioned that when the people of Philadelphia resolved to erect an hospital for their sick poor, they applied to their distinguished countryman for aid. He could not assist them with money as he wished to do, but offered to paint a picture as his subscription to the hospital, if they would provide a place for it in the structure. The painting of *Christ Healing the Sick* was the result; but so highly was it prized that the British Institution insisted on becoming the purchaser for three thousand guineas. West accepted the offer, but on condition that he should be permitted to copy and improve on the work for the American hospital. The copy was made; it was exhibited in America, as many of his former pro-

ductions had been in this country ; and so ample were the proceeds of that exhibition, that they enabled the projectors of the hospital to enlarge the building so as to admit of no fewer than thirty additional patients. At a previous period George III. was willing to confer the honour of knighthood on West; he declined it, and the success of his painting at Philadelphia is surely a greater honour by far.

Yet even this successful man was not to pass through life without some checks. The boy-devotee became the honoured and overpraised man of art; but that did not exempt him from the common lot of humanity. In consequence of quarrels with some of his brother artists, fomented by jealousy, he reckoned himself called on to resign the office of president,—which, however, was pressed again on his acceptance. The King, moreover, took offence, it was alleged, at some of West's proceedings while in Paris. The royal orders were suspended,—what the painter had regarded as insuring a provision for his declining years was cut off; and though during the thirty-five or forty years in which he had

been honoured by the King's commands much had been done, and much gained, yet, when that monarch was finally superannuated, West's payments were stopped: he appealed by new works to the public, and thus indemnified himself for the loss of royal favour, withdrawn, his biographer records, without the King's knowledge, and against his express command to the contrary.

Nor was that West's only trial. In December 1817 his wife died, after a union of fifty years. His own death, moreover, was gradually approaching: it was a gradual decay rather than any specific malady, and took place in his eighty-second year, on the 10th of March 1820. On the 29th of that month he was interred with great pomp in St. Paul's Cathedral. London was stirred by the funeral, for the noble and the famous combined with many thousands of the people to accompany the remains of the Springfield boy to their resting-place among the illustrious of Britain.

Such is the story of another life viewed from that point which illustrates our title. West was self-made, if that could ever be said of any man. By the inherent force of his

genius he surmounted many difficulties, and occupied a place far up among the distinguished men of his day. He may have been overestimated. We think he was, and posterity does not confirm the verdict of his contemporaries. There is exaggeration in the assertion\* that he is to be classed with Michael Angelo and Raphael, and that as the former was compared to Homer and the latter to Virgil, West may be likened to Shakespeare among the poets. But while discounting not a little from such an estimate, we may heartily acquiesce in the opinion that he was "one of those great men whose genius cannot be justly estimated by particular works, but only by a collective inspection of the variety, the extent, and the number of their productions."

West's industry was unsurpassed. Though he had been a mere mechanical copyist, he could scarcely have covered more canvas than he did, and the list of his works seems fabulous. Here also the man comes in direct succession to the boy—unwearied, and actually voracious of labour. Withal, however, his chief biographer has told us little of our artist's

\* Galt's "Life of West," part II. p. 203.

principles as a man. That he long adhered, with Quakerly consistency, to the practices and rules of his brotherhood is attested by the fact that he entered the presence-chamber of an Italian despot, not as an obsequious courtier, but erect and covered. Other incidents are mentioned regarding him which bid us hope that he was a man of principle, and one who feared God; but here, as often, one longs for more explicit information, for something to assure us that the Author of the true immortality (2 Tim. i. 10) was known, believed, and loved by Benjamin West. Without that, how poor his fame, what a shadow did he grasp after all !





V.

Antonio Canova.

**I**N the obscure village of Possagno, among the hills of Asolano, a portion of the Venetian Alps, ANTONIO CANOVA was born on the 1st of November 1757. His birth-place was obscure till he shed lustre on it; for some inform us that it consisted of mud-walled cabins, secluded, and hitherto unnoticed from its own insignificance. The parents of Canova were poor. His father, Pietro, was a stone-cutter. Antonio was their only child, and nothing is recorded either regarding the father or the mother to show that he who was subsequently described as "the greatest artist of this, or perhaps . . . of any preceding age," began life with anything to promote his rise. His father died when Antonio was only three years of age; and it is concluded that as Pietro

was not remarkable for talents of any kind, while he was melancholy in his temperament and weak in constitution, the loss to the child was less than in other cases it might have been. In a few months after his death the widow of Pietro Canova married a second husband.

Antonio continued to reside at Possagno, under the guardianship of his paternal grandfather, whose wife, Catterina, lovingly compensated, as far as she could, for the death of one of the child's parents, and the removal to some distance of the other. That child was delicate, but she tended him with affectionate solicitude, and in doing so was, in truth, preparing a home and a warm welcome for herself. At a period long subsequent to that to which we now refer Canova received her into his house, after he had become illustrious, and cherished her with an affection and a reverence which repaid her early care. Her bust, sculptured by himself, in the garb of a peasant of Possagno, was one of his most prized possessions, and often pointed out with true Italian affection.

Though the child Antonio thus derived

nothing but his existence from his parents, his grandfather Pasino was well fitted to exercise some influence upon his infant mind. Though poor, he was not without some accomplishments, and sometimes wrought even in marble. He thus helped to adorn some of the churches in the villages near his home; and the stone-cutter became to some extent a sculptor—humble, no doubt, yet not without a measure of attraction. But the care bestowed on Antonio's education supplies the highest encomium of his grandfather. Though the child was exposed to all the privations which are connected with poverty, he was early led, or early indulged by Pasino in those practices which formed a rude preparative for his life-work. The grandfather wished his grandson to succeed him as the sculptor-mason of Posagno, and hence, from veriest infancy, the little boy was familiarized with stone-cutting, with rude models, and ruder workmanship, such as his infantine skill could mould or master. Almost as soon as he could hold a pencil he was accustomed to draw: models in clay were early fashioned by him, and two small shrines, executed in Carrara marble, one



of them inlaid with coloured stones, and both sculptured during his ninth year, still remain to attest the boy's precocity—his early bias to his life-pursuit.

Here, then, is a boy stimulated rather than repressed by poverty, and indicating from his most tender years the bent of his mind. Spontaneously did he give himself to such aims, "amid the delights of innocence;" and thus early was he called "The sullen" by the young villagers of Possagno, for he did not mingle in their sports, and the Italian vivacity felt outraged. His grandfather's work-shop had more attractions for him than any play-ground; and an admiring biographer has carefully recorded that his grand-dame's dress was generally stained with the marks made by very tiny hands which had just been working in modelling clay. It was by that unforced but persistent course that the boy was fostering and developing his early bias; and even though there is nothing very remarkable to be recorded of any given day—how could there be in one so very young?—the whole bearing of the child indicated what his predilections were. Indeed, studious seclusion had become

a marked feature in Canova. When he was only nine years of age, whatever he may become, it was even then apparent that the boy was to be father to the man.

All this, however, has been only a rehearsal, or scarcely even that. Canova's circumstances were not such as to admit of work being long a pastime, and the means of earning a livelihood must be thought of. Soon after he had reached the age of nine, he began to be constantly employed by his grandfather in such kinds of handiwork as his strength could undertake. Leisure hours might be devoted to his favourite pursuits, but for about three years labour was his calling. He seemed destined to be the future stone-cutter of Possagno, and nothing more; at least to that the aims of his grandfather pointed.

Such, however, he was not to be, and the set time came for his entering on the course which was to render him one of the most illustrious men of modern times. Signor Giovanni Falieri of Venice had a mansion at Asolo, not far from Possagno. Thither he resorted during the heat of summer, and Canova's grandfather was frequently employed

in repairing or embellishing the villa. On such occasions he was generally accompanied by his grandson and apprentice ; and that was the channel along which the boy was to be conducted to his right position as a worker. Hitherto his aims had been rather blind gropings, or undefined longings, than any right appreciation of what was to be done. With a work-shop for a study, and the rude implements of toil habitually in his hands, there was little room for any lofty aspiration ; and though many very early productions were preserved, they acquire their importance rather from what Antonio became than from any great intrinsic pre-eminence. *But the lad himself* possessed a character which won and attracted those who knew him, and a friendship such as few but Italian natures can form sprang up between young Canova and some of the youthful Falieri. Antonio was amiable and unassuming, ardent in temperament yet gentle and modest in demeanour ; and the elder Falieri resolved to place him in a position where culture would develop his genius and mature the man. The lad's passion for the arts was manifest. Falieri was anxious both

to foster and direct it; and that desire formed the starting point for Canova on the road to fame. Some who are more fond of the marvellous than of the true, and would inaugurate everything great by a prodigy, trace Falieri's partiality to young Canova up to the figure of a lion exquisitely modelled in butter, and presented along with a dessert after dinner, to the amazement of the assembled party, and the instant celebrity of the boyish modeller. But we do not need prodigies to render him remarkable. His own genius, breaking mildly through the obscurity which environed his earliest years, is sufficient to explain what ensued. He will soon start on his life-long course.

Antonio was now twelve years of age. His abilities and his amiable character had attracted the notice of one who was generous enough to encourage such merit, and the boy was placed by him under Toretto, a Venetian sculptor, then deemed one of the ablest of his order. "The excessive passion for design which appeared in the lad Canova, determined Falieri to recommend him to Toretto as a son." For nearly two years from this period

the boy was trained by his master at Pagnano, near Asolo ; and both the teacher and the pupil appear to have acquitted themselves with more than credit in their several spheres. Antonio was unceasing in his activity, and never satisfied with the work of his hands. Drawings of this period, models, sketches in chalk, and all that could nurture the aspirations of his soul after excellence, still remain to attest the methods which he adopted to reach his object. Toretto's pupil, in short, even in his thirteenth year, filled up his briefest intervals of time with such pursuits as he zealously and more and more aimed at. Other things he might do from a sense of duty—these studies were his delight ; and while his example affords one proof more of the truth that “the gods give nothing to men without labour,” his habits presage the certain success of one so indefatigable. If the boy be so unwearied, what may we not expect from the man ?

And his progress now becomes very marked : his master, when contemplating one of the pupil's original handiworks, was obliged to confess that it was “truly a marvellous production.”



the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase from 1.1 billion to 1.5 billion. The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase from 250 million to 450 million. The number of people aged 15 and over is expected to increase from 3.5 billion to 4.5 billion. The number of people aged 15 and over is expected to increase from 3.5 billion to 4.5 billion. The number of people aged 15 and over is expected to increase from 3.5 billion to 4.5 billion.

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the 1990s, the number of people in the United States who are 65 years of age or older is projected to increase from 20 million to 30 million, and the number of people 75 years of age or older is projected to increase from 10 million to 15 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997). The number of people 85 years of age or older is projected to increase from 2 million to 4 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997). The number of people 90 years of age or older is projected to increase from 500,000 to 1 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997). The number of people 95 years of age or older is projected to increase from 100,000 to 200,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997). The number of people 100 years of age or older is projected to increase from 10,000 to 20,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997).

1. *What is the purpose of this study?*



THE YOUNG MODELLER

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The youth had modelled two angels in clay, during an absence of Toretto. They were entirely Canova's own composition, without any guide but his own power, now beginning to be creative of beauty. They were placed in a position to attract Toretto's eye when he returned, and the palpitating pupil marked with delight the pleasure of his master at the sight. It was a new stimulus, as well as a fresh pleasure ; and from such efforts of a boy of thirteen the transition was easy to still higher attempts. In his fourteenth year, accordingly, Canova endeavoured for the first time to represent the human form in stone, though he was still only preluding, preparatory to greater things, as young eagles are said to be trained by short excursions from the eyrie for their sunward flight. These figures were fashioned during the time which could be spared from the more mechanical labours of his profession ; and two of them, sculptured in alabaster of Florence, each about a foot high, were long preserved—perhaps they are still sacredly treasured—at the Villa Faleri, memorials of the precocity of genius.

These things took place at Pagnano, and

Canova, ever after his residence there, regarded it as forming one of the happiest periods of his life. His knowledge was increasing; his powers were developed; his character was formed; his social affections were nursed into vigour by kindred minds; and even then the youth was one who left such impressions behind him as betokened that he was to be a king of men. It was at this period that his mental peculiarities began—like fruit when the blossom falls from the tree—to *set*. Like all the sons of genius, Canova saw ever before him, apparently near, but really remote, a standard of perfection at which he constantly aimed. Young as he still was, such aims lured or goaded him onward, in a manner which more sluggish minds—minds formed for mediocrity, or contented with it—cannot understand. He records that “he often felt as if he could have started on foot with a velocity to outstrip the wind, but without knowing whither to direct his steps; and when activity could no longer be supported, he could have desired to lie down and die.” Struggling or soaring thus, the stripling Canova has already caught glimpses of that ideal world which he was to

do so much to people with new forms of beauty ; and one has said regarding him, that at times he would hurry to his drawings, or models, or other performances, examine them again and again, and after all depart in apparent disappointment—like one in search of something which he could not find. He was at once allured by his imagination and checked by his judgment ; and the result was a struggle after a perfection which was still long years away. Devoted as he was to sculpture, and though his heart was already given to it as his pursuit, he is to become illustrious, not by one bound, far less by some happy accident—these are the dreams of indolence—but by steadfast perseverance and rigid self-culture.

“ The heights by great men reached and kept,  
Were not attained by sudden flight:  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upwards in the night.”

In truth, every thought and every hour were consecrated by this boy-sculptor to progress in his chosen pursuit.

During the first twelve years, then, of Canova's life, we may regard his tastes as fixed : his sphere in life was chosen, and even

his boyish amusements promoted that end. Under Toretto, when Canova was in his fourteenth year, he made farther progress, and farther still, though his employment then was rather subordinate and mechanical than fitted to develop his powers. Still his longing after excellence was even then insatiable ; and at one time it allured, at other times it goaded him along the upward way. Paroxysms of fruitless despondency, when he contrasted what he could *accomplish* with what he could *imagine*, served in the end to urge him onward still. He would return to his drawings, consider and reconsider them ; and he calmed what has been called " the ebullitions of his emotion " by some new step of progress, or at least some fresh discovery of failure and its cause. About this time Toretto died, but not before he had testified both his admiration and his love for Canova by adopting him as his son.

The death of his master raised difficulties in Canova's path. It seemed not unlikely that all his aspirations were now to be quenched by the cold hand of poverty. The obscurity of his native village, and the work-shop of his

foster-father, Pasino, again appeared to be his lot, and that for life. At this crisis, however, his patron, Falieri, invited him to Venice; and when he was fifteen years of age he removed, in consequence, to that capital. The palace of Falieri was put at his service as a home. Partly with a view to self-support, and partly to promote his self-improvement, the stripling gave himself as assiduously to work at Venice as he had done in his native province. Averse to depend on charity, though generous as that of Signor Falieri, the boy artist viewed his own poverty as another stimulus to study and exertion. "I laboured for a mere pittance," he subsequently said of this period; "but it was sufficient. It was the fruit of my own resolution, and, as I then flattered myself, the foretaste of more honourable rewards, for I never thought of wealth." While labouring with these aims in Venice, he executed at least two pieces of sculpture by commission.

Including the time during which Canova served his Venetian master, it appears that his education in his profession from others scarcely exceeded two years. Both his instructors,

Toretto in the country, and a nephew of his in Venice, were kind and indulgent to their pupil; but neither of them could do much for a mind like his except to supply it with materials upon which to work; and when the shell of the chrysalis was broken, it was by internal rather than external force. The youth was thrown upon his own resources; and if, as his fond eulogists proclaim, he was destined to give to marble "the breathing contour and the beating heart," that result was in Canova's case, in an extraordinary degree, the fruit of self-education.

Stationed at Venice, then, this self-reliant and humble though aspiring lad of fifteen really enters on his great life-work. A wide field for study and observation was opened up before him, and he cultivated it with care. Every thought and every hour were occupied. He saw his life-course opening out before him full of promise, and he pursued it with corresponding vigour. His moral deportment was in keeping with his lofty aims as a sculptor; and his intensity in study is described by his contemporaries as equalled only by his "religious morality." His time was apportioned

with care—he scrupulously adhered to the duties of each allotted portion—so that, both in details and on the whole, young Canova gave no uncertain presage of what his maturity would prove to be. The private palace and the public academy were alike frequented by him for study. His assiduity attracted the attention of one of the Venetian aristocracy, the Commendatore Farsetti, and secured for the artist a commission to execute his first work in marble for which money was to be paid. That work, however, held out little promise of the future greatness of Canova; but it served to mark a stage in the acquirements of one who began in his boyhood, almost in his infancy, to climb to eminence, and who continued ascending till age wrested the chisel from his hand.

After studying and working for about a year at Venice, Canova began business as a sculptor on his own account. A statue or rather a group was commissioned by his friend Falieri, and executed at the villa at Asolo. It was finished during the artist's sixteenth year; and when that is borne in mind, this exhibition of *Orpheus and Eurydice* was a wonderful pro-



duction—as wonderful as Milton's early sonnets, or Pope's "lispings in numbers." Grief and despair, a degree of dignity combined with unaffected simplicity, are mentioned as characterizing the work. A feeling of truth to nature is apparent in the whole: and thus the lad Canova, at a period of life when other lads are undecided, unfixed, and generally useless, has taken his place far up, though by no means yet at the highest point, among the artists of his century. By his merit he is rising to honour, and leaving behind him the penury of his birth; though still, and to his dying day, cherishing the recollection of all who had ever befriended him, down to menials the most humble.\*

After a residence at Venice of about three years, Canova began to think of removing to Rome, at once to prosecute his studies and take his place at what was the centre of Italian art. His past successes had stimulated, not satisfied him, and he is now to aban-

\* After Canova had become famous, and was created a marquis, he recognised an aged servant entering a saloon in attendance upon the company assembled there. That man had been an early friend of the Marquis, who broke through the conventionalities of the place, embraced his former companion, spoke of bygone scenes common to both, and so proved that he was not merely a great sculptor, but a generous, loving man.

don the study of the conventional, and “begin the art where the art itself had begun”—in the careful study and imitation of nature. He found men busy copying the works of inferior artists; but Canova put all that aside, and went at once to the fountain-head;—“in private study he determined to follow no master, but to take nature, simple nature only, for his model.” His resolution once adopted was firmly adhered to; and in one instance more he gave proof that, young as he was when he adopted these views, they were the result of mature thought and much perspicacity. Others might regard him as a visionary youth, and they did so; but his visions were of a beauty to be striven for and a truth to be followed, and he strove and followed in spite of all rivalry. So closely did he adhere to nature at this stage of his progress, that some of his earlier works were asserted to have been wrought from casts taken from the living model. He was at least laying the foundation of that simplicity which presided at last over his most marvellous productions.

As an instance of the care which this young

man put forth in order to approximate the perfection at which he aimed, his study of anatomy may be mentioned. A sculptor without knowledge in that department is like a man attempting to walk without feet, or to write without hands; and Canova therefore adopted method after method to mature his knowledge of the human frame. First, anatomy was studied in books; then the lower animals were dissected by this youth; from these he rose to the human subject, which he scrutinized with all available exactness: and only thus did even the genius of Canova reach the excellence which set him so high. Not some spasmodic efforts, not any casual or hap-hazard acquirement, but slow, laborious, and persistent endeavours—these were the steps by which the peasant boy of Possagno rose to pre-eminence, to affluence, and a marquisate. Moreover, wherever an opportunity occurred for studying the human form in new attitudes and expressions, thither Canova would frequently resort, to mark, to treasure, and appropriate. Even when walking the streets he was all eyes, for the same purpose; and an artisan at work, a porter in powerful

exertion, gesticulation of every kind, if only it was natural, Canova studied with scientific care, and seized with an avidity peculiarly his own. And all was referred to its proper place when required; for his expertness in applying his observations became as remarkable as his eagerness to make them. Sometimes what he saw was embodied without delay in some sketch or drawing, and from that moment it was for ever his to command. Such things persisted in systematically, and with all the heart, from day to day, as in Canova's case, are sure to lead to eminence; and when it is genius that is thus schooled, we need not wonder though creations of exquisite beauty were the result. "For many years," says one of his biographers, \* "he continued to observe as an established rule, not to be deviated from, a resolution which he had previously formed, never to indulge in repose till he had first in that day produced some design."

No common-places are needed to prove that such a student, so persistent and laborious, so resolute and observant, would take his place as first among the foremost.

\* See "Memoirs of Antonio Canova," by J. S. Memes, chap. iv.

Nor was he thus assiduous merely in regard to sculpture. All that could elevate or purify his mind was studied scarcely less. Literature he cultivated with care; to history he devoted much attention;—in short, whatever could furnish him for his work as a sculptor was studied and mastered by Canova, till both taste and erudition presided over his literary compositions. Were not such things attested beyond the power of challenge, we might hesitate to announce them, so incredible do they appear in one still so youthful. But *truth* should always be set forth: it can be its own defender. And we conclude with the words of one who knew all Canova's habits: "He knew," says the younger Falieri, "how to instruct himself in every kind of information connected with literature and the arts at the very moment when his heart and hand were occupied, with exquisite address, in giving to marble life and movement." \*

Canova was employed as has now been described from the autumn of 1773 to the

\* It is recorded of Canova, that having formed an acquaintance with some young Spaniards when at Venice, "he acquired their language in a few days," to be able to converse with them.

winter of 1780. From day to day he was adding to his acquirements; he was, in truth, furnishing a model for all who would do thoroughly what they do at all. And now he must take another step in advance, and, by the exhibition of one of his works, test the public taste. He did it; and his statue of *Orpheus*, by its simplicity and truth to nature, commanded the approbation of all who were competent to judge in such a case. He has taken his place among the artists of modern times. It is high already. Will the future show that he mounts higher still? Is this lad, who has hitherto laboured and studied, and studied and laboured in obscurity, in an under-ground chamber granted to him by the monks of St. Stefano, really to take his place among the sons of genius—the founders of new eras—the marked of all observers? His ceaseless preparatory studies—his painstaking, all but unmatched—his persistency, in spite of all that might have lured a youth, and that youth an Italian, and that Italian a Venetian, from his onward path—all foretell his eminence. He confessed that it was the applause bestowed at Venice

on his statue of Orpheus that made him a sculptor; for his previous love of art was now intensified by approbation.

Canova's efforts were not relaxed in consequence of applause; they were stimulated. Orders began to flow in; and his subsequent productions may each be regarded as marking a new stage in the upward way. Indeed some of his handiwork at this period was so exquisite, that when he re-examined it half a century thereafter, it occasioned a degree of sorrow that in all that period his own progress had not fulfilled, as he judged, his youthful promise; so firmly from the first did he grasp the principles of art really fine.

Our sculptor is now upwards of twenty years of age, and youth is passing into manhood. So beautiful are some of his productions, that envy or wonder is tasked to find some other explanation than the true one—that is, the carefully educated taste and genius of the sculptor. But it is not our design to trace him through all his works upwards to the unchallenged supremacy which he won. On the 28th of December 1780

he reached Rome, where he had resolved to settle; and it was there that his dawning manhood began to enjoy both the rewards and the honours which followed gifts like Canova's, tutored as they had been during childhood, boyhood, and youth. At Rome he was welcomed and honoured as such a man deserved. Some of his works were exposed to the severest ordeals of criticism—not malignant, as often, but generous and genial; and the sculptor became the more admired the more his statues were scrutinized. On one occasion in particular, in the palace of the Venetian Ambassador, a kind of jury was empanelled. A work by Canova was examined by critics and connoisseurs in his presence, and the trembling sculptor was hailed by common acclamation as a diligent student as well as an exquisite imitator of nature. Success was now sure. Rome stimulated Canova by its models of beauty; and if heretofore we have found him associating with peasants at Possagno, we are now to see him the associate of Princes, the favourite of a Pope, and courted even by an Emperor. True, he was still so poor that he could not



even purchase the marble in which to embody his grand conceptions: if he would ascend higher and higher, it must still be by toil and struggles. His industry appears to have outdone its former self. While he laboured he shut himself up from the gaze or the criticism of mere curiosity, though he still continued as bent on progress as when he started, an unknown stripling, at Venice. Those who have wandered among the galleries of Rome can easily understand both the raptures and the benefits which an artist like Canova would there enjoy. A portion of every day was still devoted to study, and the rest to labour in his secluded studio. "So ardently, indeed, were these pursuits cultivated, and so entirely did professional advancement engross his care, that . . . he might frequently be found at dawn, with his sketch-book or modelling apparatus, seated before the statues in the court of the Capitol, or the colossal figures ascribed to Phidias and Praxiteles on Monte Cavallo." About this period (1781) the Venetian Senate granted Canova an annual pension of three hundred ducats (about £60) for a period of three years,

“that he might in Rome perfect himself in his profession, and reflect honour on the republic.”

He had, however, a more congenial reward on an early day. He had laboured in secret and seclusion for some time on a group representing *Theseus vanquishing the Centaur*, and the time arrived for exhibiting his work. The Venetian Ambassador invited a brilliant party. A model of the head of Theseus was placed where all could see it. It became the sole centre of attraction for a little, and the criticisms were both keen and various—the common opinion being that it was a cast from the work of some Grecian sculptor. All were agreed as to the beauty of the work, however diverse their views of its origin; and the ambassador seized the fit moment for conducting his guests to the place where the marble creation stood—heretofore carefully concealed, but now flashing on their astonished gaze with a loveliness worthy of Greece. Surprise, delight, admiration reigned in the minds of all present. Canova confessed that even death itself could not be more terrible than the thoughts of that ordeal; but his tri-

umph was perfect for the time. Some who then admired might afterwards pursue the sculptor with envious malice; but the self-taught man, still little more than a youth, has taken his place beside the masters. Simplicity and truth to nature had hitherto signalized him. He is now adding grandeur and majesty to his productions; and envy itself must concede that he has earned his lofty position by sleepless efforts both of study and of work. A youth who was yesterday unknown has made himself to-day the object of a thousand eulogies, shaded by not a little envy. He is still only in his twenty-fifth year.

The progress of this young man becomes the more remarkable when we take into account his natural dispositions. He was retiring, humble, modest, and diffident. He was, at the same time, from the first unfriended, except as his fine parts secured him friends. He was poor, moreover—so poor that he could not, as we have seen, purchase marble to work upon; and yet see how he surmounts all, subdues all, and takes his place among those whom the gifted from

every land delight to honour. A model this, if ever there was one—a stimulus, and an encouragement.

Canova was not, however, to proceed farther without opposition. His sculptures differed too widely from those which had long been in fashion to admit of their ascendancy remaining unchallenged. He was accordingly assailed by adverse criticism. He was accused as being capable only of exquisite finish in his productions, but devoid both of fire and grace. So that the early years of his residence in Rome were spent under a species of persecution, where mediocrity assailed genius, and envy the successful; while the aged, who were wise in their own conceit, pitied the young adventurer who had entered on a career different from theirs. Canova's genial, generous spirit, was vexed by such things, and his letters attest his unhappiness—an unhappiness augmented by his dislike of controversy and his retiring modesty. But men grew weary of such attacks. Generous friends rose up to defend a man who was too gentle to defend himself. He persevered in his studies; he grew rooted in the principles which guided

him. The Capitol, the Vatican, and other storehouses furnished him with materials for testing his own maxims. He tested them, and though he had to pay the price of eminence by encountering antagonism, the models at whose feet he sat down to learn generally calmed his anxieties or raised him up from his despondency. Such were the tempests which made the oak strike deeper root—such the angry waves which tried the sea-worthiness of the ship or the skill of the pilot.

The calm equanimity of this man, whom one loves the better the farther his character is examined, appears in the answers which he sometimes made to criticism. A British nobleman had offered one upon a work of Canova. He took it in good part, produced a statue in which the criticism was embodied, and then told his critic that "he loved better to speak with his hands than with his tongue"—with his chisel than with his words. Again : when urged to refute an injurious critique upon some of his works, he replied, that "they were before the public, and the public has a perfect right to judge of them; but I do not

design," he said, "to answer any critical observations otherwise than by employing every effort to do better." *Effort to do better*, indeed, was the motto of his life, from the time when he chiselled the two shrines in his boyhood till he died full of years and of honour. All toil, all criticism, and, in the end, even opposition, was welcome when it led or urged him onward to eminence. All his thoughts were directed, and every hour was devoted to that end. His ideal, like the horizon, was ever at some distance; but he pressed on the more, till he could embody in marble what he fancied in his mind.

Professional engagements now crowded upon Canova; but it is no part of our object to register these, except as they may serve to show that the boy makes the man. He sculptured the cenotaph of Pope after Pope and statue after statue, alike unsatisfied with his past attainments and eager for progress in the future. There is no break and no blank in the career of Canova; all is continuous and persevering. Success only stimulated him, and he continued as laborious after his fame was established as he had been in his obscure

vault at Venice. For example, he was sculpturing a monument where two lions were introduced, and he delayed the work till he could study the habits and forms of the living animals. He then visited them at all hours, to mark their natural expressions of gentleness or ferocity; and one of the keepers was hired to bring information when aught occurred that was likely to guide or to instruct the sculptor. In consequence of such painstaking, the two monuments of two Popes occupied him the greater part of ten years; and it is believed that while blocking out, chiselling, and perfecting these works—nearly the whole of which was done by his own hands—Canova contracted that disease which eventually laid him in the grave. He escaped from the fret and the fever of many an artist's life by declining all petty disputes and personal contentions. He looked calmly out from his studio upon a warring world—warring, we may add, not seldom about himself; but calm and self-possessed as he was, his labours were too abundant, and his body at least was not immortal.

Crowned heads now delighted to honour

Canova. He was invited by the Russian Court to remove to St. Petersburg; but his native country possessed too many and too bright attractions for his spirit, so that he declined the imperial invitation, and would not even visit the northern capital. He was about the same time decorated with the insignia of the Order of the two Sicilies by the King of Naples; yet, amid crowding honours, he continued as laborious and persistent as before. But when the French Revolution had spread its effects to Rome, Canova retired from his much loved pursuits to his native Possagno, there to bewail in silence and solitude what he believed to be the injury inflicted upon Rome and the Pope. Sorrows like his were scarcely soothed by the fact that the peasant boy of that village had now become the friend and companion of nobles, patronized by senates, honoured by princes, courted by the crowned, and admired by thousands.

During his retirement from Rome, which lasted for about a year, Canova betook himself to painting, and some of his admirers tell that his success in that department was as



signal as in the sister art. On his return to Rome, after visiting Vienna and Berlin, he resumed his former position—or rather, he rose higher and higher from year to year. He and his works with him were regarded as the property of Rome, and the latter were watched over with jealous care. He had still to encounter the rude opposition of the envious.

“The paltry jargon of the marble mart” was still employed to depreciate, and, if possible, to fret; but Canova made his usual reply to all assailants—by the works of his hands rather than by the utterances of his lips, and pursued his own ideal perfections. At the request of Napoleon Bonaparte, he made a visit in 1802 to Paris, to model a bust of the future Emperor, who strove to detain the sculptor in the French capital. But Canova would not be moved either by favours or by frowns, and returned to Rome loaded with honours by the ruler who had at length found a man who could neither be awed nor allured. At a subsequent period Canova executed a more congenial commission, when he visited Paris to recover the objects of art

carried thither from Italy by the victorious Napoleon. In the year 1815 the great Italian sculptor visited England; but, after all, such things were only brief breaks in his life-work. He wrought on to the last as he had done at the first, though he was now president of various societies connected with the fine arts, and though the former peasant of Possagno was enrolled, by order of the Pope in full consistory, in "the Golden Volume of the Capitol" of Rome, as well as employed as a sculptor both in the Old World and the New. His success in recovering the lost art treasures of Italy from Paris, and re-conducting them to Rome, had made our sculptor the most popular man of the day, and he became a Roman patrician as the Marquis of Ischia, with a pension of three thousand crowns. His diploma was written by the Pope's own hand—in short, all was done that could add to the honours of one already signalized. But all these things had no effect on the simple manners, the modesty, and reserve of Antonio Canova. While he could hold a chisel, or wield a mallet, he laboured still as a sculptor.

Towards the close of his life he formed the resolution of embellishing his favourite Possagno with a church, and sculptures by his own hand. In 1819 he arrived at that secluded spot, and gave full vent to his generous, loving nature, alike in gladdening the people of that region, and in adorning it as he had designed. A day of lively and exhilarating gala spent among the rustics of those hills, he called "one of the few days of real existence;" and if hitherto we have seen him great as an artist, his moral greatness and the qualities of his heart render him now not less conspicuous. Memes says: "The generation had not yet passed away that beheld the mover in these events commence his career among the obscurest inhabitants of these very solitudes; the noblest of distinctions had raised him by virtuous exertion to dignity and wealth; but now, amid the ever remembered scenes of early days, he was about to consecrate talents and riches to the glory of his God, and to the service of his species." From season to season he urged on the work thus begun. To procure funds to meet the demands which his undertaking re-

quired, he undertook work after work, and that with waning health and a shattered constitution. Some of his most beautiful creations were the productions of that period; but his health was now declining. He left Possagno for Venice on the 4th of October 1822; his mortal disease was on him before he began the journey. At Venice he became worse: his uncomplaining calmness fostered hope; but on the suggestion of some friends his temporal concerns were finally arranged. On the 12th he was so ill that his friends intimated the approach of dissolution. The Marquis received the intelligence with composure, addressed himself to the rites of his religion, and on the 13th of October, when near the close of his sixty-fifth year, the spirit of Antonio Canova passed away. All that could do honour to the dead attended his obsequies, which took place at Possagno on the 17th. "Amid the tears of a vast concourse of his countrymen, the mortal remains of Canova were consigned to their parent dust." Florence, Venice, and Rome contain monuments to the memory of one of the greatest of Italians. The tears of thou-

sands, and the unstinted encomiums of many more, show how deeply he had impressed himself on his age.

Hitherto little has been said of the moral or religious aspects of Canova's character. The love of fame was the dominating principle in his nature, and of eminence in art as the way to it. His love of his fellow-men was great—his friendships were all intense though calm. His industry, we have seen again and again, was unwearied; and his genius unquestionably raised him from the obscurity of poverty to the rank of a noble. But high above and far beyond all these, man has relations at which we have scarcely glanced—he has relations with God; and in this respect we have no such clear information as some of the admirers of Canova desire. As belonging to the Roman Catholic faith, his life, and we may sadly add, his death, partake of the dark defects of that creed. One has said, indeed, that "Religion, pure, mild, and rational, possessed the deepest influence over the heart of Canova;" and his virtues are the praise of all. His success in life he ascribed to the goodness of Providence;

and his charity was of that kind which rejoiceth not in iniquity. His gratitude for favours was life lasting: these and a hundred other traits all show how amiable were his relations to his fellow-men, and with them how fresh his heart was, and how loving. But, after all, the question returns—Was the Saviour's religion Canova's? Was the sure foundation his resting-place? Was the finished work his hope? These are questions which we have not the means of answering; and if they cannot be answered aright, how vain were all his successes—what labour lost were all his efforts—how disappointing all his excellence, if the one thing needful was missed!





## VI

### Alexander Wilson.

**T**HE history of human suffering, could it be written, would furnish a wonderful commentary on the words of the Tempter, "Ye shall be as gods." Such a history might be recorded in blood or read with groans without rendering it extravagant or extreme.

ALEXANDER WILSON encountered more of such sufferings or trials than fall to the lot of most men; but as most of them were self-imposed in a favourite pursuit, he demands our admiration even more than our sympathy. He was born at Paisley on the 6th of July 1766, and sprang, like many more who have risen to eminence, from the common people. His father was a weaver, and was noted for his devoutness, his integrity, his good sense and intelligence. He cherished the hope that

Alexander, who was his eldest son, might one day be a minister of religion; and as the father thus took his place among the devout of his generation, those who partake of his spirit will know how to estimate that hope. With a view to prepare him for what might have been his profession, the son was early placed under the care of a competent teacher; but the early death of the boy's mother, the second marriage of his father, and other things, shut up that prospect, and Alexander Wilson at the age of thirteen was bound apprentice as a hand-loom weaver. But even thus early he had acquired tastes and habits which never forsook him. The books which his father put into his hands while yet a boy taught him to relish literature, and whetted his love for the charms of nature,—acquirements which he has described as “the sources of nearly all his enjoyments.”

Though the imaginative boy did not relish the prosaic work of a weaver, he yet plodded through his apprenticeship with characteristic perseverance, and continued for four or five years after its close to work at the same trade. During those early years he wrote not a little poetry, and indicated unequivocally



cally the bent of his mind—not towards webs and looms, but the broad field of nature, and more especially the feathered tribes of earth and air. In solitude the lad would often wander, a student or admirer of nature, gradually though unconsciously preparing his own mind for the part he had to act in life; fretted often to despondency by the circumstances in which he was placed, yet shunning all that would have tended to his moral degradation. Many plunge into dissipation amid trials like those of young Wilson: he was never known to seek relief from such a source. “Almost from infancy,” he says, “he showed a fondness for birds, and was little less than an enthusiast in his researches for them;”—and that was both a safeguard for the boy and a pursuit for the man.

About this period young Wilson became acquainted with another weaver, who knew Latin, and assisted him in its study. He also promoted his self-culture by the study of the English poets, and was, in short, laying the foundation of those acquirements which, under the propelling power of his genius, guided him to a high place among his fellow-men. While

working as a weaver at Paisley, Wilson sometimes retired to bed during the day, in order to be able to indulge without interruption in the day-dreams to which he was in youth addicted.

But Wilson's mode of life was changed for a time: he forsook the loom, and became a peddler. While travelling from town to town, and from county to county, carrying his shop with him as he now did, he was in training for future wanderings upon a yet grander scale. In his Scottish journeyings, however, he combined the two offices of peddler and poet; for while he sold his goods, he solicited, not always with success, subscriptions for a volume of poems which he had resolved to publish. The very contents of his *pack* he enumerated in rhyme, and his "Advertisement Extraordinary" is witty enough to amuse, if it was not so attractive as to pass off the poetry. This wandering life continued for about three years; but the enthusiasm which bore him along at the commencement gave place to dull realities and repulsive difficulties at last. His poems could not be sold: deep disappointment and chagrin followed; and when we add that he had sometimes scarcely

the means of procuring the necessaries of life, enough has been said to show how surely his day dreams had melted away—though, at the same time, a hardy discipline was passed through, which prepared Wilson for yet greater endurance when the set time had come. He did his best to prevent the evil effects of his present hardships;—he increased his knowledge by his acute observation, and his powers of description by frequently recording in graphical terms what he saw or experienced: but amid all this training of his early life, it is fast becoming apparent that Alexander Wilson was not destined either to weave muslin or to sell it. Poverty first, and disease following in its train, drove him to serious, or rather to gloomy thought. He had to face eternity. He sought “the favour of Him who has the keys of hell and of death,” and resolved to make the things of the world to come his delight, “whether health should again return, or death have left the commissioned dart.”

After his recovery Wilson became more and more literary, and contributed to some of the periodicals of the day. About the close of the last century, the effects of the French Revolu-

tion, as is well known, were deeply felt by many in this land. The sanguine were excited; the disaffected were emboldened, and Wilson took his place among the latter. He satirized with severity some whom he should not have assailed; and as a result he was prosecuted, imprisoned, and compelled publicly to burn his offensive satire. These and other things matured his resolution to emigrate to America; but before he set sail, he waited upon those whom he had satirized, frankly acknowledged his fault, and asked forgiveness. Such productions he long afterwards deplored and condemned as "the sins of youth." Having in the meantime returned to the loom, he worked with all his might to raise funds to carry him to America; for which country he sailed from Belfast, and reached Newcastle in the State of Delaware on the 14th of July 1794.

Boyhood and its acquirements, then, have now and for some time given place to the painful realities of manhood, and after a peculiar discipline Wilson has reached the land where his genius was to be nurtured to maturity. A few shillings formed his all when he landed in America. From his land-

ing-place he proceeded to Philadelphia, a distance of about three and thirty miles, and he has recorded the joy which he felt at the sight of the first bird which he saw in the forests of Delaware—a red-headed woodpecker. It fell to his rifle, and was esteemed the most beautiful creature he had ever beheld. That bird was the first-fruits of a copious harvest. It was like a miser's first guinea, or a soldier's first triumph.

But Wilson had not escaped from hardships by reaching America. No work could be found for some time, and his last farthing was spent ere any was procured. The birds might be beautiful, or even entrancing, to his fond eye, but they could not yield him food and raiment, and he was alternately a copperplate printer, a weaver, and a peddler as before. Hardships and difficulties thickened, instead of growing fewer, and all his resolution was needed to keep him from sinking under his trials in a strange land. Among other pursuits, Wilson tried that of a schoolmaster, and continued for some years industriously engaged in that capacity. His profits, however, were so small, and his despondency so great, that,

though his income was somewhat eked out by land-surveying and other means, he was compelled at last to think of returning to his native land. He battled still, however, with poverty. To accomplish some benevolent purposes, he kept a night-school for some time; and amid these hard experiences the time slowly crept on when Alexander Wilson was to enter on his real life-work—not to escape from difficulties, but to encounter them in a new and higher form.

It was in the year 1802 that this took place. Wilson had passed from school to school without much improving his position; but at the time just referred to he became acquainted with some who could at once appreciate his genius and help him to indulge it. Amid all his changes he had been assiduous in self-culture. The German language, music, drawing, mathematics, and, above all, natural history, had been studied by him; and the time has come when some of these acquirements are to be called into requisition. He had formed an acquaintance with one who was as devoted to the study of nature as Wilson could be; that acquaintance ripened into a

life-long friendship, and he was now able to revel amid scenes and stores where the objects on which his heart was set abounded. Western birds flitting or flourishing amid Western vegetation formed a kind of Eden for him, and he was not slow to enjoy it. During a fit of despondency he was advised to try to paint birds as a diversion; and a portfolio full of specimens was placed before him. "All the energies of his nature," we read, "were thereupon aroused; he saw, so to speak, the day-spring of a new creation, and from being a humble follower of his instructors, Wilson was soon qualified to lead the way in the charming art of imitating the Great Original."

He enables us to form some idea of his enthusiasm at this time by the manner in which he describes himself. He says: "I sometimes smile to think that while others are immersed in deep schemes of speculation and aggrandizement, in building towns and purchasing plantations, I am entranced in contemplation over the plumage of a lark, or gazing like a despairing lover on the lineaments of an owl. While others are hoarding up their bags of money without the power of





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enjoying it, I am collecting, without injuring my conscience or wounding my peace of mind, those beautiful specimens of Nature's work which are for ever pleasing. I have had live crows, hawks, and owls, opossums, squirrels, snakes, lizards, . . . so that my room has sometimes reminded me of Noah's ark."—He watched the vehemence of the golden woodpecker—he pitied the palpitations of the little mouse. It was thus that he studied in what he called "the great aviary of Nature," and thus that he fostered his enthusiasm, for the time when he should go forth into the great Western wilderness in quest of its living beauties, heretofore entirely unknown.

Nor was that time distant. Wilson had written to a friend to say, "I am most earnestly bent on pursuing my plan of making a collection of all the birds in North America;" and he proceeded, though still amid many difficulties, to carry out his plan. In October 1804 he commenced his first journey—it was to the Falls of Niagara: and now all his acquirements as a peddler accustomed to daily travel came into play. On his return journey, however, the storms of winter overtook

him. His gun, his baggage, and all the additions which the former was constantly making to the latter, were carried by him through deep snow, and he reached home, laden with many a prize, early in December, after an absence of fifty-nine days, during which he had walked twelve hundred and fifty-seven miles—forty-seven of them on the last day. Wilson's own account of this journey was, that he made it "through trackless snows and uninhabited forests, over stupendous mountains and down dangerous rivers."

But hard as was his experience upon this occasion, it only whetted his desire for a more extensive expedition, where his acquisitions might add something to the stores of knowledge. He is, in short, now "determined to become a traveller;" and his indomitable resolution rendered it apparent that as he had at length found his life-course, no barrier but death could arrest his resolute career. Poverty might still be his lot, and while planning his new enterprise he actually had less than a dollar in his possession; but, as undaunted by poverty as by other hinderances, he persevered. Though baffled in his attempts to enlist the

co-operation of engravers and others, he was not to be put down. The persistent boy, the plodding peddler, has become the indomitable man, and we shall see that he conquered in the end. He who as a boy studied, and described in poetry, that wondrous microcosm, a wren's nest, amid the solitudes around Lochwinnoch, is now studying the habits and describing the haunts of the eagle amid the tumultuous environs of Niagara. He is, moreover, about to plunge into forests and swamps where human feet had never trod before; and to a mind so filled as his with one master passion—the love of birds—the one of these was a fit sequel to the other.

In the year 1806 Wilson was induced to apply to President Jefferson for an appointment in an expedition which was about to be despatched for scientific purposes to explore the waters of Louisiana. No answer, however, was deigned by the man in power, and our enthusiast was left to prosecute his enterprise unpatronized by wealth, and without a single smile from greatness. But he had resources in himself, and now entered on the duties of assistant editor in an American

reprint of a Cyclopædia, to realize, if possible, some funds for accomplishing the desire of his heart. While he was so employed all his leisure hours were devoted to preparation for his great undertaking. So ceaseless was his application that sickness was the result ; but even the relaxation which it made necessary helped forward the master aim of our devotee. During a tour on foot through part of Pennsylvania, he collected specimens of birds ; he studied their habits, and stored his mind still more for his *American Ornithology*, though years must yet elapse ere we see it. When a vessel leaves her harbour in our island, her desired haven may be the Antipodes ; but if her captain be what he ought to be, every setting of the sails, every movement of the helm, every order issued to the crew will bear more or less directly on the final destination. It was thus in spirit now with Alexander Wilson in all that his hands found to do. Underlying all there was a tenderness of sensibility, and a seriousness of tone in his mind, which endear him to us the more the farther we study his character. If he could gaze enraptured on the plumage of a bird, we

may do the same while we hear him connecting all that was beauty to the eye, or music to the ear, with "our Friend and Father" on high. "I see new beauties," he says, "in every bird, plant, or flower I contemplate; and find my ideas of the incomprehensible First Cause still more exalted the more minutely I examine His works."

As the result of this devotee's studies, wanderings, and endurance, a superb volume, the first of the *American Ornithology*, was published in the year 1808. Its elegance took America, then in its infancy in such things, by surprise. Its high scientific character, its literary merits, its graphical descriptions, its genial and reverential tone, all help to enhance our wonder that one so poor and unfriended should have achieved such results. True: as pensive boy, as plodding peddler, as dreamy poet, as a buffeted and much tried man, Wilson had passed through schools well fitted to nurture a mind like his. Rarely, however, have such results been accomplished amid such difficulties, or in spite of them; so that Wilson becomes one more to be added to the list of those men whose example proves to



us that a true man moulds circumstances much more than they affect him.

But we should consider some of his doings in detail. No dangers, no fatigues could damp Wilson's ardour in his great pursuit. The mere chance of success was stimulus enough for him. On he would press in pursuit of some coveted specimen, through quivering morass, or tangled forests, or across dangerous rivers, or in by-ways such as only the feet of one devoted as he was had then ever trod. His industry, his perseverance, his sagacity, his elasticity amid much that was fitted to repress, were all remarkable. America could not then supply him with a patron. He was sometimes penniless, and he had long to wait for a recompense; yet all did not prevent, though it might retard, his success. Month after month he spent among the thickets and the swamps. His friends might remonstrate regarding his toils; but his rejoinder was, "Life is short, and without exertion nothing great can be performed." In a word, no one can even glance at the achievements of this man without re-echoing the words which one has employed regarding him:

"It is truly delightful to contemplate such feats of genius, so scantily aided, in a hard-working mechanic, patronized by none." Even in Paisley at his loom, and in its prosaic neighbourhood, the imaginative boy had felt a strong power attracting or propelling him towards certain pursuits; and we now see him at least beginning to reap as he had sown. He had expended all his savings on his work. He had visited every town within a hundred and fifty miles of the Atlantic coast, from the St. Lawrence in the north to Florida in the south, and the question is now to be solved—With what result?

But the collecting of specimens was not Wilson's only labour: he had to canvass for subscribers to his work; and that also he did with characteristic perseverance. He met with neglect from some, with insolence from others, with coldness from crowds; but he was not to be chilled. Nay, he pressed forward with his work, and tells us (in 1808-9) that he had so stationed his "pickets and outposts that scarcely a wren or a tit should be able to pass unobserved." Amid his wanderings we read at one time of a journey of ninety

miles, at another, of one of a hundred and forty-seven miles, "among dreary savage glens and mountains covered with pines and hemlocks;" and the sights and sounds of such wilds were ravishing to Wilson—a set-off to the coldness which he sometimes experienced from his fellow-men.

It is no object of this volume to describe his discoveries: it is with the discoverer that we have to do. But some of his sketches read like romance; while his endurance in the cause of his favourite pursuit appears like the very chivalry of science. "I have laboured," he once said, "with the zeal of a knight-errant,"—it was to procure purchasers for his book; but the remark is true in regard to the higher pursuit of the beautiful, the new, the wonderful in ornithology; and his accounts of what he witnessed are often as vividly picturesque as the plumage of his favourites was exquisite.

It appears, however, as if it would be wrong to omit his account of the mocking-bird, one of his favourites, and altogether a wonder. Its plumage, Wilson says, has nothing gaudy or brilliant, and were that the only recommendation of this bird, he would scarcely be

noticed. But the ease, the elegance, and the rapidity of his movements, the animation of his eye, and his intelligence in seizing upon lessons from almost every bird-note, are surprising. Wilson speaks of them as a kind of genius. His voice is full, strong, and musical, admitting of varied modulations, from the mellow note of the thrush to the savage scream of the bald eagle. While he faithfully copies his original, the mocking-bird greatly improves the force and sweetness of the notes which he borrows. In the dewy morning, when the woods are vocal with myriads of notes, this bird rises pre-eminent above every competitor. His music alone is listened to ; the rest seem a mere accompaniment to him. His native notes appear varied beyond all limits, and his imitations are endless. He continues to sing with undiminished ardour for half an hour, or even an hour at a time ; and his expanded wings and tail, as well as the gay action of his whole body, tell the ecstasy which this songster enjoys. He mounts or descends as his notes swell or die away ; and at the last of them " he bounds aloft with the celerity of an arrow, as if to recover or recall his very

soul, expired in the last elevated strain." It seems, in short, when the mocking-bird is in full song, as if the whole feathered tribes had met on a trial of skill; while his imitations will send the sportsman in quest of birds which are, perhaps, not within miles of him: nay, the mimic can deceive the birds themselves, for they will dive into the thicket to escape from a mere imitation of the hawk, or hasten to their nests at the fancied call of their mates. Add to all this the almost farcical effects of some of his imitations, as when he blends the notes of the thrush with the crowing of a cock, and we have a combination of gifts in this one bird fitted to attract and to charm those who are far less ornithological than Wilson was.

Thus chafed not seldom by men, but regaled yet more by the objects of his passionate pursuit, Wilson spent the remainder of his days in journey after journey. In the month of February 1810 he left Pittsburgh in a small skiff, and descended the Ohio to Louisville, which he reached in safety, though he had made the voyage of seven hundred miles all alone. From Louisville he walked to Lexington, a distance of seventy-two miles;

and proceeded thence on horseback to Natchez, a distance of six hundred and seventy-eight miles from Lexington. Encumbered as he was by his shooting apparatus and specimens, he yet made his way through cane-swamps and wildernesses which would have baffled, perhaps, any man but Wilson. He was seized by disease : an Indian prescribed strawberries, and they proved a remedy. But we dare not linger over his personal adventures : they constitute a romance in real life. His voyage on the Ohio was attended, at times, with imminent peril ; and the intrepid voyager increased it by the pursuit of paroquets and other rare birds amid the swampy jungle which skirts the river. But his spirit expanded with the majesty of the scene ; and perhaps the things which are seen and temporal never yielded a loftier pleasure to mortal man than they did to Alexander Wilson, the lonely voyager on these waters for a distance of more than seven hundred miles. His observation was whetted ; his stores, live and dead, accumulated ; and he extracted joy from what might have evoked the pity of others. Here swimming a river—there encountering a tempest ; at one place

nearly dead—at others exposed to unutterable hardship amid horrid swamps ; to-day assailed by some rude squatter—to-morrow helped on his way by some more civilized “stoic of the woods, a man without a tear,”—he still pressed on, from Natchez to New Orleans, from New Orleans to New York by ship, and thence to Philadelphia, his home, laden with booty, thankful for mercies, and now hopeful regarding the future. “Since February 1810,” he writes, “I have slept for several weeks in the wilderness alone, in an Indian country, with my gun, and my pistols in my bosom ; and have found myself so reduced by sickness as to be scarcely able to stand, when not within three hundred miles of a white settlement, and under the burning latitude of twenty-five degrees. I have by resolution surmounted all these and other obstacles in my way to my object, and now begin to see the blue sky of independence open around me.” Such were his words to his kindred in Scotland, accompanied with promises of aid to his aged father, whom Wilson had ever loved and revered with all the intensity of his large and affectionate nature.

Success now crowned the long exertions of this admirable man. Volume after volume of his great work had appeared. His name became a household word to many, and before his death the list of his subscribers included almost every royal personage in Europe, while other honours now awaited him. In the course of the year 1812 he made a journey to the east, sailed up the Hudson, visited Lake Champlain, traversed the mountainous region near Connecticut River, climbed one of the White Mountains, and was taken up as a Canadian spy ;—all the while collecting specimens, and adding to stores already so vast. But his wanderings are drawing to a close. Five times had he visited the coast of New Jersey in pursuit of aquatic birds; and these and his other journeyings carried him over more than ten thousand miles. But he now entered on his last tour. The seventh volume of his *Ornithology* was published early in 1813, and he set out to collect materials—marine water-fowl—for the eighth. On his return he proceeded to prepare the volume, but his toil was so continuous and severe that disease again invaded him. He did com-



plete the volume, however—it was in the press ; but dysentery had seized the devotee, and, in spite of all that could be done to save him, Alexander Wilson died, on the 23rd day of August 1813. The immediate cause of his death was characteristic. While sitting in the house of a friend he caught sight of a rare and long-coveted bird. He rushed out in pursuit, swam across a river over which the bird had flown, killed it with his rifle, and returned in triumph. But the effort was fatal, and it proved his last. Charles Lucien Bonaparte, Prince of Musignano, completed Wilson's great work by publishing a ninth volume.

And such is a sketch of another true man's life, in as far as it bears on the topic of the present volume. It would be a mistake to suppose that a biography of Wilson has here been presented. All that has been attempted has been to note how the dispositions, aims, habits, and predilections of the boy presaged those of the man ; and there can be no need now formally to show how Wilson's life subserves that end. Here is one who, even in boyhood, was devoted to certain pursuits and studies. Though repressed by poverty and

many trials, he continued by his own exertions to press onward and upward, without friends, without encouragement,—well-nigh without bread. In America it was still the same. For eight years, poor and unfriended, he still pressed on; and such were the attainments which he reached that some portions of his writings may be regarded as classical. Friends did smile on Wilson, for he could not be known without being loved. Yet he, a single individual, without patron, fortune, or recompense, was left to achieve in seven years as much as the combined science of Europe had taken a century to accomplish. It was a gigantic undertaking, accomplished with gigantic power; and the result was a monument reared to Wilson by his own hand, such as posterity could never have matched. Add to this the beauty of some of his later poetry—for example *The Foresters*, written to commemorate one of his journeys in America; and when these things, the product of his maturity, are laid side by side with the pets and the poetry of his boyhood, are not the latter just like the vestibule or the porch to which the former are the temple or the palace?



## VII.

### Henry Kirke White.

**I**N the whole range of British Biography there is scarcely a life which could better illustrate the subject of this volume than that of HENRY KIRKE WHITE. Such early assiduity, and such precocious ripeness as his—such devoted ardour, and such ample acquirements as the result—all combine to render him a model—a stimulus to the indolent, and a noble encouragement to those who would grow in knowledge as Kirke White grew. It is true that he was also, in some degree, a beacon; for a genius yet greater than his own has said with truth regarding him,—

“ ’Twas thine own genius gave the final blow,  
And helped to plant the wound that laid thee low.”

Withal, however, there is much in the life of this devotee to knowledge to guide us in the

way to excellence. His ardour without his excess may be blessed in a thousand ways.

Henry Kirke White was born at Nottingham on the 21st of March 1785. Like many of the sons of genius, he was in no degree indebted to high lineage for his endowments or his place among men. His father was a butcher. Between his third and fifth year Henry attended a school kept by a woman, who had the sagacity to discover, even then, his extraordinary capacity, and to predict his future eminence. At a very early age his love of reading had already become a passion before which every other thing gave way: as it was the source of many both of the joys and the sorrows of his brief career, it manifested itself at a period when few children have emerged from a mere infantile condition. So completely was the infant-student absorbed in what he read, that call after call by his mother to take his food was unnoticed or unheeded. And as he had thus a passion for learning, so he was ready to teach to others what he himself knew. When only about seven years old he would steal unperceived into the kitchen of his home,

there to teach the servant to read and write : and even then he wrote a tale of a Swiss Emigrant—supposed to be Henry's first production ; and he gave it to the servant, because he was ashamed to show it to his mother.

When he was about six years of age Henry began to attend a school where he was taught writing, arithmetic, and French ; and such was his industry, or such his versatility, that on one occasion he there wrote separate themes for each of twelve or fourteen boys who were his class-fellows. But the bane or the drawback of that school was, that being in Nottingham young White was employed one whole day, and during his leisure hours on the other five, every week, in carrying his father's basket over the town. It is not difficult to imagine how a boy of his quick parts and admirable talents would be repressed or chafed by such employment, though no doubt it operated as a whet or a stimulus to a spirit like his.

It was not in the power of his family to give Henry the education which his talents deserved, and it was therefore determined to apprentice him as a hosier. At the age of fourteen our devoted student was thus placed at a stocking

loom ; and employment so prosaic might well have chilled the first glowing of poetic inspiration. He was indeed unhappy ; but his ardour was not quenched, nor his love of books diminished. He pined for something to occupy his brain and not his ten fingers. For a year however, he continued at the loom, quarrelling with the lot assigned to him, and gradually convincing his friends that he had a mind destined for something higher than the weaving of stockings. The law was thought of, and at the end of twelve months, when he was about fifteen years of age, Henry Kirke White passed from the hosier's workshop to the office of the town clerks of Nottingham. Long before this period he had sought solace in verse-making ; and in his fourteenth year, when his prospects appeared gloomy enough, the eager lad, addressing *Contemplation*, said,

“ Men may rave

And blame and censure me, that I don't tie  
My every thought down to the desk, and spend  
The morning of my life in adding figures  
With accurate monotony . . . .  
But O ! I was not made for money-getting :  
For me no much respected plume awaits,  
Nor civic honour, envied.”

Under such convictions White gladly forsook the loom ; and having found at length a congenial sphere, it was there that all the energy and concentrated force of his mind first fully appeared. To his ardent mind, we are assured, nothing seemed discouraging when it lay in the direction of his likings ; and though much engrossed with the business to which he was articted, he gave himself so eagerly to the study of Latin, that in ten months he could read Horace with tolerable facility, and had made some progress in Greek. "He used to exercise himself," Dr. Southey, his friend and biographer, says, "in declining the Greek nouns and verbs as he was going to the office and returning—so valuable had time become to him ; and from this period he contracted a habit of employing his mind in study during his walks, which he continued to the end of life."—Such is the way to eminence ; and though Henry Kirke White purchased his, as we shall see, with his life, it is nevertheless true that no dreamer of golden dreams—none of the indolent who would yawn themselves into learning, or any desired acquirement—ever arrived at excellence without effort. Ask

the gold-digger what he endured ere he found his nugget. Ask the millionaire what rack he suffered in adding thousand to thousand—at least at *first*.

Young White felt the difficulty now referred to. So wholly devoted was he to intellectual improvement, even when a mere boy, that he became in the pursuit a stranger to his own family. Even at his meals with them he read. His evenings were entirely given to study. To redeem time he would not sup with the family, but apart in his own little chamber; and never did the gold-hunter dig for his treasure with greater ardour than White searched for knowledge. The Law, as then his business, was his first pursuit. Greek and Latin came next. Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese he also studied. To Chemistry, Astronomy, and Electricity, he devoted some attention. Drawing, Music, Mechanics, and other departments, he cultivated and practised till he felt that some of them might encroach on his more severe or professional pursuits.

Amid these multifarious studies, he became a member of a literary society, and so far surprised the Fellows, who admitted the boy into their



society with reluctance, that their thanks were unanimously voted to him for a lecture which he delivered. He was elected their Professor of Literature; in short, a review of this period surprises us by the variety of his pursuits, and the undoubted progress which he made in them all. We are speaking of one who was still only in his fourteenth year, and who was recently employed in carrying a butcher's basket along the streets of Nottingham; but as his mature conviction was, that "there is no condition so happy as that of a man who leads a life of full and constant employment," so even in his boyhood he bears witness to the vigour with which he held that conviction, or the firmness of the foundation which he laid for it. No prophet was needed to foretell to what all this must lead.

Though well pleased with his profession as an attorney, Henry's soaring spirit now began to think of higher things. His hopes, indeed, were very faint, but he began to dream of the University as what he might perhaps reach, after all. On his way to eminence, however, he never allowed day dreams to take the place of work-day realities; and he accordingly began

to contribute to the *Monthly Preceptor*, a periodical publication which proposed prizes for boys and girls at school when their productions were deemed worthy of a place in its columns. At the age of fifteen Henry gained one of these prizes, a silver medal, for a translation from Horace; and in the following year a pair of twelve-inch globes were awarded to him for an account of an imaginary tour from London to Edinburgh. As an example alike of his rapidity and his persistency, we are told that the resolution to compete for the latter was formed one evening at tea, and at supper he read the performance to the family. It occupied seven pages in the *Preceptor*. The same mode of competition he pursued with success upon several other occasions.

To the *Monthly Preceptor* the *Monthly Mirror* succeeded as the depository of Henry's juvenile essays; and there they attracted the notice of some men of note in their day. Indeed his biographer records that the stripling's rapid improvement was now as remarkable as his industry was unwearied; and encouraged by some whose acquaintance he

in consequence made, he began about the close of the year 1802 to prepare a volume of his poems for the press. After surmounting various difficulties connected with that publication, which would, perhaps, have damped any one less persistent than Henry, that volume appeared ; and its appearance was the occasion at once of trouble and of joy to the author. It was a source of trouble, for an adverse and heartless criticism to which it was exposed in at least one quarter imbittered the life of the young poet at the time ; but it was a source of joy also, for the asperity of the criticism, contrasted with the promise or the actual performance of the volume, first secured for Henry the notice and the friendship of Dr. Southey. It was the sanguine hope of the boy-poet that his volume might procure for him the means, which his own circumstances did not supply, of studying at one of the English universities ; and though that object was not accomplished precisely in the manner which he expected, he did find his way thither at last. The productions of a lad who had not completed his eighteenth year might have commanded indulgence, had they required

it, from generous minds; but a critic in the *Monthly Review* spoke of the volume in a way as damaging to the critic as it was painful and bitter to the poet. He felt and said that he had been "represented actually as a *beggar*;" and the unhappy review "cut" him so deeply that it "haunted him incessantly;—he was persuaded it was an instrument in the hands of Satan to drive him to destruction." Henry Kirke White *was* on the way to eminence, and no dull reviewer could hinder him from reaching it. The dullest, however, could bring clearly before the stripling poet the price which he must pay for what he coveted so warmly; and few have paid it with more painful feelings than our youth experienced when he first appealed to the public.

Amid the eager pursuit of earthly knowledge, Henry Kirke White had not hitherto given its due prominence to that which comes from above. Engrossed with the near and the temporal, the eternal remained in the shade. His ignorance in this respect was indeed great, and his views most shallow. The one thing needful was unheeded, and the nobler part of man's immortal nature was consequently left without

an object;—it was ill ordered and unsatisfied. Now, however, this ardent mind began to grapple with eternal realities. A well-wisher gave him Scott's "Force of Truth;" and it was blessed to make young White a captive, or rather truly free. He said, on glancing at it, that he could soon produce an answer to its pleading; but about a fortnight afterwards, when inquiries were made for his reply, his tone was changed,—things were becoming new: he acknowledged that to answer the volume was impossible, and added, "he would willingly give up all acquisitions of knowledge, and all hopes of fame, and live in a wilderness unknown till death, so he could insure an inheritance in heaven." It was the wish of an eager soul still ignorant of the divine mode of securing that inheritance,—that is, merely *by taking it*; but the aspiration was in keeping with Henry's whole conduct—it guided his whole future career, even though it betokened his ignorance at the time.

He has now, then, found a pursuit worthy of all his powers and more, and he enters upon it with characteristic ardour. Religion began

to engage his anxiety, as of all concerns the most important; and though still only a stripling, he braced himself with all the energy of his nature for his new pursuit. His self-ignorance was easily detected by one so acute and now so earnest, and he began to endeavour with all his might to mould his conduct according to the religion of the Saviour and the Bible. That attempt speedily led him, of course, to a clear knowledge of his weakness and his shortcomings; and it is written, "He could find no comfort in his penitence, but in the atonement made for human frailty by the Redeemer of mankind; and no strength adequate to his weakness and sufficient for resisting evil, but the aid of God's Spirit, promised to those who seek him from above in sincerity and earnest prayer." It is, in short, the old faith of David and Isaiah, of Paul and of John,—the faith which has overcome the world in ten thousand times ten thousand cases; and we shall see how it helped Kirke White to triumph.

No sooner had this lad adopted the religion of the Bible than he began to long with exceeding great desire to proclaim the eman-

cipating truth to others. One of the universities, and attendance there, now formed the burden of his thoughts more than ever. Every argument was used by his friends that seemed likely to turn him from his purpose, but in vain. The energy hitherto concentrated upon Latin and Greek, upon poetry and similar pursuits, is now to be mainly devoted to that one pursuit, the true Immortality, which subordinates all to itself. Obstacles might lie in his way, and many did, but he resolved to attempt to surmount them. The tears of his mother he found it difficult to dry. The appeal, founded on the lucrative nature of his present profession and the precarious revenues of his proposed one, it was not easy to gainsay; but still Henry was unmoved. He felt an impulse, and would obey it; he believed, and therefore he acted. God helping him, nothing should prevent his becoming a minister of the Truth.

And his action was, as usual, energetic. He applied to a society called "The Elland" for aid; and should that application fail, he designed to offer himself to the Marquis of Wellesley as a student at the college which he, as

Governor-General of India, had founded at Fort William. Henry's purpose in that step was to take orders as a chaplain or a missionary in the East ; but failing that application, so resolutely was he bent on carrying out his great pursuit, he designed to " place himself in some other way of making a meet preparation for the holy office, either in the Calvinistic Academy or in one of the Scotch Universities." " Go coolly and deliberately but determinately to the work of your salvation," was a counsel which he once gave to a friend: he is now acting upon it himself. With the whole force of his nature he is preparing to do good.

Young White now left his writing-desk for a month, with consent of his employers, and retired to a sequestered nook, at once for unbroken study and change of air, as his health began to be affected. In his seclusion he would wander in the woods till night was far advanced, and in other respects act as a young poet might be supposed to do. Meanwhile some of his friends were using all their influence to secure for him the means of entering the University of Cambridge, sometimes with bright prospects of success, but at last they



seemed all utterly to fail. He was disappointed, but addressed himself with renewed ardour to the duties connected with his present profession,—that is, he resumed his law studies, and with more than his former zeal. He allowed himself no time for relaxation, little for his meals, and scarcely any for sleep. He would read, Dr. Southey records, “till one, two, or three o’clock in the morning, then throw himself on his bed, and rise again to his work at five, at the call of a *larum* which he had fixed to a Dutch clock in his chamber. Many nights he never lay down at all.” And amid all this, vain were all remonstrances and dissuaves, even from his mother. Here, for once, he was undutiful: “Neither commands, nor tears, nor entreaties, could check his desperate and deadly ardour.” In all this, however, the devotee was outraging laws physical as well as moral, and Nature will yet claim her revenge. Much might be stored up during such night-watches, much mastered—much, in one sense, enjoyed; and in deceiving his mother by extinguishing his taper, as if he had gone to rest, and then relighting it when she had retired, he might think he was doing

what he could justify;—but was not that just the seed-time of which an early death was the fruit? We may admire such ardent devotedness to the pursuit of knowledge, but admiration cannot blind us to the penal results of such habits. His inspiration, however, during these nights of desperate study he thus describes. When his hopes of entering a university seemed to be extinguished, he said—

“Come, Disappointment, come!  
 Though from Hope’s summit hurled,  
 Still, rigid nurse, thou art forgiven;  
 For thou severe wast sent from heaven  
 To wean me from the world,—  
 To turn my eye  
 From vanity,  
 And point to scenes of bliss that never, never die.”

Amid all this squandering of health, or this fostering of disease, it does not appear that Henry ever thought that he was doing what was wrong. His ruling passion for reading and knowledge blinded him, and years subsequent to this period, when attending the university, he wrote to a friend to say, “I believe I must copy the old divines in rising at four o’clock,\* for my evenings are so much taken up with visiting the sick, and with

\* But when did they retire to rest?

young men who come for religious conversation, that there is but little time for study." So difficult is it for man to walk in the right way when a passion, however exalted, is his guide.

It was not wonderful that his health gave way under such a course of study as Kirke White pursued at Nottingham. It was during the formative period of his life, when he was only some seventeen years of age, and when his constitution could ill bear the strain to which he put it. He now became pale and wasted. He was forced to think of the time when life's sad journey would be over—in fact, to face Death; and his friends believed that he never completely recovered from the shock which his constitution then received amid the sleepless wear and tear of a devotedness like his.

But the prospect of his yet being able to resort to the university became brighter than ever, just when he supposed his hopes to be all blasted. He had been brought under the notice of the Rev. Charles Simeon of Cambridge; and with his promised help, little difficulty was felt in raising means for sup-

porting the young student, especially such a student as White. At the same time, the Elland Society already, mentioned, were disposed to befriend him. After an examination, in which his unhappy volume of poems figures once more to his annoyance, he was informed that the members were well satisfied with him, and had placed his name upon their books. His theological knowledge, they said, was satisfactory, while "they thought his classical proficiency prodigious for his age." The aid of that body, however, was declined on the advice of Simeon, and according to the personal predilections of the youth.

Henry Kirke White, then, is virtually on his way to Cambridge. His friend there advised him to study in private for a year before actually entering the university; and the advice was followed. During a year's residence in Lincolnshire, our youth pursued the same self-consuming course as that already described, and another illness was the result. He frequently studied fourteen hours a day; and neither such riding on horseback nor such sparing use of time as his means could furnish could enable his constitution to cope

with such work. Yet his progress during that year is described as "astonishing," by one who was thoroughly competent to judge in such a case. He went to Cambridge, in consequence, distinguished at once by native genius and by extensive classical acquirements. But he also carried thither the seeds of a disease whose end was death; and the new sphere on which he entered was, what it has been called, "a hot-house to ripen them."

Here, then, we may in one case more contemplate the boy as passing or passed into manhood. Henry Kirke White was now about twenty years of age. We have seen how the boy thought, studied, wrote, aspired, hoped, or was disappointed; and we are now to behold the results of all these as he stands at the threshold of manhood, and from that spot slowly glides down the incline to the grave. He lives long enough, and toils hard enough, and soars high enough, to show that here also the boy made the man. Let us, however, briefly trace his course at St. John's College, Cambridge. It is little more than joining his funeral procession, and following him slowly to the narrow house.

During his first term a university scholarship became vacant, and self-taught as the lad for the most part had been, those who best knew his acquirements advised Henry to compete. His time was now, therefore, devoted to that object. At Cambridge, as at Nottingham, he read in bed; he read during his walks; he read where, when, and how he could, till his strength sank once more under the high pressure, and Henry was compelled, after all, to withdraw from the competition. Besides, as the general competition of his college was at hand, he had lost time for making the needful preparations for that ordeal, while a failure there would be fatal to his prospects. During the intervening fortnight, however, he read what should have been spread over a whole term, and at last went in tears to his tutor to say that he could not face the examination. His disease had returned, and sleepless nights, quivering nerves, and a palpitating heart, formed a bad preparative for a trial on which the young man's prospects for life were thought to depend. His tutor, however, was most anxious that Henry should enter the lists. Strong

medicines were administered to enable him to hold out for the six days during which the examination lasted ; and one result was that he came out the first man of his year ! The butcher's boy, the attorney's apprentice, the belaboured poet, and the emaciated student, all in one, takes his place as the ripest scholar in places where scholarship is proverbial ! Writing to his brother, he said, " I have been examined twice, and almost without looking over the subjects, and I have given satisfaction ;—but I am obliged to be kept up by strong medicines to endure this exertion, which is very great." It is not common to be indebted to a surgeon and his stimulants for success in such struggles ; yet it was so with White, and if his success was signal so was the price which it cost.

At this point we get a glimpse into his inner life which is certainly not the least interesting in his history. Prior to his examination, as the result of excessive study, his mind was quite unstrung. He was sometimes too ill to read, and too desponding to bear his own reflections, and wandered from room to room in college after college, seeking some one to

solace, to soothe, or to bear with him. He "implored society, a little conversation, and a little relief of the burden which pressed upon his spirits;" but there is reason to believe that amid these things he was learning a wisdom which universities cannot teach. When announcing both his trials and his successes to a friend, he says of the latter, they "do not affect me as they once would have done: my views are widely altered, and I hope that I shall in time learn to lay my whole heart at the foot of the cross."\*

At different periods of his history difficulties had arisen, as we have seen, regarding the means of supporting Henry at the university. His success, however, had now opened up resources which made his mind easy upon that subject. He had at least a competency adequate to his moderate desires; and his conduct in this respect was always signalized by

\* The following extract from one of his papers will show how this youth distributed his time:—"Rise at half-past five; devotions and walk till seven; chapel and breakfast till eight; study and lectures till one; four and a half clear reading; walk and dinner, and Wollaston and chapel till six; six to nine, reading, three hours; nine to ten devotions; bed at ten." Among his papers were also found other notanda, bearing on what is, in truth, the grand life-work of every man, his preparation for eternity, and the revealed means of being prepared. If there was one who united "serving the Lord" with "diligence in business," it was Henry Kirke White.



a beautiful gratitude to those who befriended him. But though that source of disquietude was removed, his health was still precarious or threatening, and more and more so in consequence of his unbending habits as a student. During his walks, for example, when at college, he committed a whole tragedy of Euripides to memory. In his second year he was twice distinguished, being again pronounced first at the great college examination, and one of the three best in another department, concerning whom the judges could not decide. The result was, as his distinguished biographer has recorded, that "never, perhaps, had any young man in so short a time excited such expectations; every university honour was thought to be within his reach; he was set down as a medallist, and expected to take a senior wrangler's degree." These things, however, only hastened forward the sad close of all. They goaded him to exertion, and exertion was fast becoming the prelude to death. Dreadful palpitations, nights of sleeplessness and horror, and of spirits depressed to the very depths of wretchedness, were now mingled in his lot. He might, perhaps, have

escaped from all this had he seen his way to accept of an office in Nottingham—the mastership of a Free School, estimated to be worth from £400 to £600 per annum. But he declined proposals made regarding it, as his acceptance would have prevented him from entering on the Christian ministry. He, consequently, continued studying still—the mathematics now ; and though he professed to take some relaxation, that to him was more than the work of other men. He returned to college, after a short absence, so completely ill that no power of medicine could save him now. His mind was worn out, we read ; and “ it was the opinion of his medical attendants that if he had recovered, his intellect would have been affected. The scene closed on Sunday, October 19, in the year 1806, when Henry Kirke White was in his twenty-second year—a very ideal of the vanity and vexation of mere earthly pursuits.

How much learning, what numerous acquirements were laid in his grave, we need not try to tell. His literary executor and biographer has carefully told us the effects which the industry of the boy produced upon

his mind when examining his papers. Some of them had been written probably before he was married. Law, Electricity, Chemistry, Sacred Latin History, Chronology, Divinity, the Sciences—nothing Dr. Southey says, seemed to have escaped him. He had begun three volumes when very young and projected other literary works. But his own presentiment of an early death, realized, as we have seen, nipped all his schemes while it also embalmed the quantity of his whose moral conduct was as pure and his views of heavenly truth for the world, just as pure as his scholarship was astronomical in scope in its exactness and its range. Some who pride themselves on holding views of life very different from those of John Keble White have been constrained to make a party so fervent and a life so pure. In it is in his development from youth to maturity that we are chiefly interested here and we need not carry now to the end of the letter was a fit and consistent system of the same. A mind like his, continually and rapidly progressive, must needs make more than common greatness, or surely not at all consumed. White's may be

said to have done both; and while we cannot but deplore that ardour which drove him forward on the way to an early grave, neither can we cease to wonder at the strong powers of the boy, fainting at last in the grand attainments of the youth. "I have found," he once wrote, "and think that the best remedy against lukewarmness is an obstinate persisting in prayer until our affections be moved." Pity that he was not as obstinately persistent in prayer against his own excessive ardour, though its object was noble and pure!

We close our narrative with his own words, addressed to a friend. One had said to him and another sufferer that they should both proceed to Lisbon, for both were consumptive; and after the death of his companion Henry wrote, saying, "You see how the good providence of God has spared me, and I am yet living to serve Him with all my strength. Had I died then, I should have perished for ever; but I have now hope, through the Lord Jesus, that I shall see the day of death with joy, and possibly be the means of rescuing others from a similar situation. I certainly thought of the ministry at first with improper motives,

and my views of Christianity were for a long time very obscure; but I have, I trust, gradually been growing out of darkness into light, and I feel a well-grounded hope that God has sanctified my heart for great and valuable purposes. Woe unto me if I frustrate his designs!....”

The soul which has reached that altitude, whether in boyhood or in manhood, can scarcely be said to have passed prematurely away. It has learned what life was given for.





## VIII.

### Sir Joshua Reynolds.

**H**ERE is, perhaps, no class of men who more largely illustrate the lesson of this book—that the boy is father to the man—than that of painters; and the reason will be found in the well-known saying of Horace, "*Poeta nascitur non fit*"—"the poet is born a poet, does not become so." The saying is applicable to all departments of art. No doubt much is owing to diligence and culture, the patient development and tutoring of the original faculties. Even where there is no great original faculty, persevering application may carry a man to considerable eminence. But we have reason to believe, from all that we have observed of the history of art, that that towering pre-eminence which makes a man's name a watch-word in the department of effort which he

has chosen, and which belongs only to the few, has never been reached apart from that peculiar, natural aptitude which separates the individual possessing it from the mass of his fellows. This is, to some extent, the case in all professions, and in all departments of effort, but in none of them so much as in those connected with art; and hence it is that in connection with these there are so many examples of early development in the direction in which the individuals in question were destined to arrive at pre-eminence, and to obtain honour and renown.

Of this the subject of our present sketch, Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS, was a notable instance. His father was the Reverend Samuel Reynolds, a clergyman of the Established Church at Plympton, in Devonshire, where Joshua, the tenth of a family of eleven,—five of whom died in infancy—was born, July 16th, 1723. His father was what may be termed a quiet, inoffensive man, walking the round of professional duty, both as a clergyman and as the president of a public school, with tolerable regularity, if with little enthusiasm, and by no means disturbing him-

self much about the education of his children. This *laissez-faire* policy was probably increased with regard to his son Joshua, by finding that his mind did not fall in with those educational exercises designed for him. His predilection for art speedily announced itself; a taste which his father considered as synonymous with indolence, as appears from the fact that he wrote on the back of one of his son's earliest drawings, "Done by Joshua out of pure idleness." One of the earliest works, among others, by which his love of art and his ambition to excel were stimulated, was Richardson's "Treatise on Painting," although, even at eight years of age, he had studied the "Jesuits' Perspective," so as to be able to apply it with considerable skill and effect to a drawing of his father's school, an elevated building supported on stone pillars. Even before this he had been accustomed to try his pencil not a little in copying some slight drawings made by two of his sisters, who seem to have had a considerable taste for art. From this he passed to prints which he found in a translation of Plutarch. He next obtained possession of a Book of Emblems by a



Dutchman, the prints in which were of a better character, and to which he devoted himself with great enthusiasm.

These early predilections ere long convinced his father that it would be vain to urge him to the practice of physic, the profession to which he had mentally destined him. On the contrary, he resolved to encourage him in what seemed to be so strongly the bent of his mind. On seeing the drawing of his school, above referred to, he is said to have exclaimed, "This is what the author of the 'Perspective' asserts in his preface, that by observing the rules laid down in this book, a man may do wonders—for this is wonderful." The earliest known picture of any importance which he attempted was a portrait of the Rev. Thomas Smart. He was then only twelve years of age. He continued his art-studies in this somewhat desultory manner till he was seventeen years of age, when his father sent him to London, and placed him under the care of Mr. Hudson, one of the most largely employed in the branch of portrait-painting, although certainly an indifferent artist. This took place on October 18, 1741—that being the







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day of the month which was sacred to the memory of St. Luke, the great patron of painters. Notwithstanding the happy auguries which the friends of the young painter founded on this, it does not seem to have been fraught with much good to him in his studies. Hudson, though popular for a time, was a man of small capacity, and might be considered rather as a *manufacturer* of portraits than a genuine painter of them. His ideas were meagre and few, and continually repeated themselves in the most formal and stereotyped manner, within the limited circle in which they moved. Not much, it was evident, of either instruction or impulse was to be gained from such a teacher, and after being with him about two years, Joshua returned to Devonshire, and set up as a portrait-painter on his own account in the town of Plymouth Dock, since known as Devonport. His services here were called into requisition chiefly by the naval officers, of whom he painted several portraits. The first picture which was of the nature of a group, was one which he painted at this time,—namely, portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Elliot and family. The composition was

somewhat of a pyramidal character, which led the artist to observe as he surveyed it when finished, "I see I must have read something about a pyramid, for there it is."

Various pictures of this period are still preserved, and it has been remarked of them, that although sometimes carelessly drawn, they are distinguished by breadth of colour, by freedom of handling, and, not unfrequently, by great truth of expression. If he obtained little benefit from his intercourse with Hudson, he does not, at all events, seem to have contracted any of the vices of his manner, excepting, perhaps, some degree of stiffness and formality in the attitudes of his portraits, a peculiarity which he threw aside ere long, and passed out into a richer and freer style.

The father of Reynolds died in 1746, when the painter, whose fame was beginning to be widely spread abroad, was twenty-three years of age. Among his special friends and patrons, at this time, he could number the third Lord Edgcumbe, and Captain, afterwards Lord, Keppel. In common with most young artists he had a strong desire to visit Rome, in order to study the celebrated master-pieces in that city.

An opportunity for gratifying this desire occurred about three years after. Captain Keppel was appointed commodore in the Mediterranean station, and he invited Reynolds to accompany him, to which he consented. In the course of this excursion they visited Lisbon, Gibraltar, Algiers, and Minorca; at the last of which places Reynolds was extensively employed to paint the portraits of the officers in the garrison. During his stay at this island he met with an accident which threatened to be of a very serious nature. His horse took fright one day when he was riding, and dashing down a precipitous part of the road, he was severely cut and bruised about the face, so that part of his lip had to be cut away. The mark of this appeared in a slight deformity of the mouth which never left him. From Minorca he proceeded to Leghorn and thence to Rome.

The impression produced by his first visit to the Vatican, and especially that produced by his first contact with the great works of Raphael, he has carefully recorded. Strange as at first thought it may seem, he was much disappointed. They were so entirely different from what he had conceived them to be—so



immeasurably removed from the rigid and formal style of art which had prevailed in England, and with which alone he had been familiar—that it was some time before he could discern their excellence and appreciate their lofty beauty. This, however, could not fail to come, and not much time had elapsed ere he began to take them in, in all their simple grandeur, so that he became one of the most enthusiastic of all the admirers of that illustrious Italian. The fact was that he had many preconceived, false notions to get rid of; and besides, as he himself remarked, a certain degree of previous culture is necessary for the full appreciation of any great work in art, and that culture it was impossible to obtain in England at that time.

During his residence in Rome he diligently improved his time and opportunities for becoming acquainted with the peculiarities in thought and style of the two great masters, Raphael and Michael Angelo, the latter of the two being even more the object of his admiration than the former. With the exception of a very fine portrait of himself, and a somewhat burlesque copy of Raphael's School at Athens, Reynolds painted very little at Rome which

was worthy of notice. From Rome he went to Bologna and Genoa; thereafter he visited in succession, Parma, Florence, and Venice; he also touched at Paris, where he met with Chambers the architect, who afterwards co-operated with him in founding the Royal Academy. Having returned to England in 1752, he established himself as a professed painter in St. Martin's Lane, London. It was not long ere he found that he would have a battle to fight before he should obtain anything like fair recognition—a battle not with the public, but with his brother artists—his old master, Hudson, taking a foremost place in the opposition. He had obtained a boldness and freedom of style and a brilliance of colouring which they professed to regard as subversive of all the established principles of art; and they continually taunted him with Lely and Kneller as authorities in painting with whom he was putting himself in manifest antagonism. This was probably the reason of that dislike to the productions of these artists which he more or less betrayed to the very close of his career. It is curious to read his description of the manner of those who thus opposed

him in the early part of his professional life. "They have got a set of postures," he says, "which they apply to all persons indiscriminately; the consequence of which is that all their pictures look like so many sign-post paintings: and if they have a history or family piece to paint, the first thing they do is to look over their Common-place Book, containing sketches which they have stolen from various pictures; then they search their prints over, and pilfer one figure from one print and another from a second; but never take the trouble of thinking for themselves."

Notwithstanding the ungenerous opposition referred to, Reynolds held on in the even tenor of his way. A portrait of the second Duke of Devonshire, followed by that of his faithful friend and patron, Commodore Keppel, greatly added to his fame. He had just one struggle more ere he attained to full and undivided recognition. This was in connection with one Liotard who had come over from Geneva to London, and who, although of small merit, contrived, through the influence of a few patrons, to rise into considerable though temporary celebrity. This was to Reynolds a matter

of annoyance, as he had no respect for the talents of Liotard. In a short time, however, his reputation began to wane, and he returned to Geneva, leaving Reynolds in undisputed possession of the field.

At this time he removed from St. Martin's Lane to a fine house in Great Newport Street, and there prosecuted his profession with much success. He was now thirty years of age—his reputation was high and wide-spread, and his commissions were both numerous and lucrative. He became acquainted with Samuel Johnson in 1754, and it is said that a remark which he let fall in conversation tended greatly to fix him in the estimation of the great lexicographer. Some ladies present were regretting the death of a friend to whom they were under deep obligations, when Reynolds remarked, "You have, however, the comfort of being relieved from the burthen of gratitude." It seemed to the ladies a selfish suggestion, but Johnson maintained it as true to human nature, and on going away accompanied Reynolds home, and thus a friendship was inaugurated between these two great men, which continued with little interruption to old age.

Reynolds was, to a considerable extent, a man of the world, and he carefully studied those little arts of pleasing which are found to be so requisite for a portrait painter, or indeed any other whose profession brings him constantly into contact with persons of various character. Although thus unlike Johnson in many respects, he nevertheless cultivated his friendship, and derived much benefit from intercourse with him, which he plainly asserts in his Discourses before the Royal Academy. The prices which he charged for his portraits increased with his reputation. At first they were five guineas, some years after they were twelve, and then twenty. It is supposed that at the most lucrative period of his career he used to paint a portrait at four sittings, receiving six different sitters each day, and thus carrying on a variety of subjects at the same time. In 1760 he raised his price to twenty-five guineas, and, we are told, "began to lay the foundation of a fortune." It has been said by some that his great reputation and success excited the jealousy of Hogarth; but there seems to be little ground for this supposition, and it is certainly not what one

would infer from the blunt and downright character of the great art-satirist.

In 1760 Reynolds was instrumental, along with others, in establishing an exhibition of works of British artists, in imitation of those which had for many years existed on the Continent. The introduction to the catalogue of this exhibition was written by Dr. Johnson; in which he enters into a sort of *defence* of such exhibitions, vindicating the artists from the supposed charge of vanity or selfishness in exhibiting, and asserting that such exhibitions were simply for the benefit of art itself—a position which, absurd in itself, not all the eloquence of Dr. Johnson was able to make credible.

A year after this date Reynolds' pecuniary prosperity began to effloresce in a change of residence from Newport Street to a splendid mansion in Leicester Square; to which house he added a fine gallery for the exhibition of his pictures, finishing with a carriage of more show than taste, the wheels being carved and gilt, and its panels painted with representations of the four seasons.

All the brilliant wits and literary celebrities

of the day were accustomed to meet round his table in Leicester Square—Johnson, and Percy, and Goldsmith, and Burke, and Garrick, and even Sterne. Reynolds was munificent as a host, and wine was not wanting in abundance to flavour the wit and the sarcasms of that eminent circle. The host counted himself sufficiently compensated for his liberality by the confidence and friendship of his guests, and that insight into character and the philosophy of human life which could not fail to be obtained from habitual and easy intercourse with such eminent men. It was about this time that he painted his well-known picture of "Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy,"—a work which many have praised, but the propriety and principle of which many also have questioned.

The incessant labours of Reynolds began to tell upon his health, and in 1762 he repaired for a time to his native county of Devon. It is said that no great enthusiasm greeted him there, except on the part of a young man who has since become his biographer. Northcote himself mentions that he first saw him at a public meeting, and that he contrived to get as near

him as possible, so as to be able to touch the hem of his garment,—a circumstance which afforded him immense satisfaction. From his sojourn in Devonshire his health derived great benefit, and he shortly returned to London and to his labours with renovated powers. At this time his reputation was so high, and the demand for his services so great, that he required to employ several young men to assist in the subordinate parts of his pictures. It is said that his profession now yielded him an income of six thousand pounds a year. About this time, however, he was again attacked by an illness of a nervous description, but much more alarming than the previous one. Johnson was absent in Northamptonshire, but on hearing of the attack he wrote to him in terms of the warmest respect and sympathy, offering to repair to him without losing a day, if his presence would be of the slightest service towards the promoting of his recovery; “for,” said he, “I know not how I can so effectually promote my own pleasure as by pleasing you, or my own interest as by preserving you, in whom, if I should lose you, I should lose almost the only man whom I can



call a friend." This illness was tedious, but the recovery came, and Reynolds was once more enabled to resume his professional work.

In 1765 several important productions came from his easel, among others, portraits of Lady Banbury, Lady Elizabeth Keppel, and Lady Waldegrave, which competent judges pronounced among the finest of his works. The impulse which he had given to art began to tell on the coming generation, and to raise up men who threatened to rival his fame. Barry and West were among these; but their growing acceptance did not interfere with the popularity of Reynolds, who still maintained his position as the foremost man in British art.

Although the name of Reynolds is for ever associated with the Royal Academy as its first president and otherwise, he was by no means one of the most enthusiastic in its origination. He seems to have doubted greatly for a little as to its success, although his sympathy and support were finally secured through the persuasions of West, Chambers, and others. The Incorporated Society of Artists had existed since 1765, and the existence of this operated as a

barrier in the mind of Reynolds. It had failed, however, in some of its principal objects, and when, in 1768, Reynolds entered the apartment where the thirty who had been nominated as the first members of the Royal Academy were assembled, and when, on his making his appearance, the whole of them rose simultaneously and hailed him as their first president, he was visibly affected, and after consultation with his friend Johnson, agreed to accept the honourable office of President. The two leading features of this important institution, which has exerted so powerful an influence on English art, were a school of design for the instruction of students, and an annual exhibition, not only of the works of academicians, but of any other native works of merit; the expenses being defrayed from the proceeds of the exhibition. There were two honorary offices attached to the Academy, that of Professor of Ancient Literature and of Ancient History: Johnson was appointed to the one, and Goldsmith to the other. They were both without duties and without pay, and Goldsmith's remark, on hearing of his appointment, was somewhat characteristic. "I took it," he

says, "rather as a compliment to the institution than any benefit to myself. Honours to one in my situation are something like ruffles to a man who wants a shirt." To the great delight of all the King added his *impri-matur* to the Academy by conferring upon its president the honour of knighthood.

That Sir Joshua would make an excellent and efficient president of the Academy no one doubted; and his earnest desire for its success was soon rendered evident by his voluntarily undertaking to deliver a series of Discourses illustrative of the great Principles and Methods of Art. These "Discourses" are now well known. They were fifteen in number, all carefully written, and delivered at such intervals that from first to last they were spread over a number of years. They are distinguished for clearness of thought, breadth of view, and variety of knowledge; and contributed at the time, and have done so ever since, to the diffusion of large and just views with regard to the nature and value of art. A series of papers in "Blackwood's Magazine," about twenty years ago, was devoted to the exposition of them, and may be read with much

profit by the individual who wishes an intimate acquaintance with the views and feelings on art entertained by Reynolds.

To the first exhibition of the Academy Reynolds sent several important works, portraits of ladies eminent for their rank or beauty, to which, in accordance with a prevailing affectation of the times, he affixed names derived from classic mythology. From Northcote, who became his pupil in 1771, and who had ample facilities for forming a judgment, we gather some interesting particulars of his domestic and social manners. His admiration of Sir Joshua indeed seems to have been almost unreasonably high. He tells us that he had been accustomed to regard him as the greatest painter that ever lived. He speaks of him as being greatly distinguished by gentleness of manners and refinement of habits ; and he adds that what with these, and the splendour of his establishment, and the extent of his fame, " almost all the men in the three kingdoms who were distinguished in literature, in art, at the bar, in the senate, or in the field, might be occasionally found feasting at his social and well-furnished table."

There seems to be some doubt as to the accuracy of this representation, so far as the elegancy of his table was concerned. Courtenay and others speak of his entertainments as having been characterized by abundance much more than by refinement and elegance; and they represent his sister, who lived with him, notwithstanding that wit and genial kindness and humour which won the hearts of all, and especially that of the stern lexicographer, as being far from particular in the equipment and order of her table. No doubt, however, has been thrown upon the copiousness of the supplies; and this, with many, would doubtless go far to obliterate other defects. By this time Reynolds had raised the price of his portraits to thirty-five guineas, without any diminution of the demand. He paid a short visit to Paris, the precise object and effect of which are equally unknown. In July 1773 he visited Oxford, and had conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Civil Law.

Dr. Beattie, the author of a work on the "Immutability of Truth," was held by Reynolds in high esteem, and about this time he painted his celebrated portrait of him with accessories

which gave the whole an allegorical meaning. It was severely criticised by Goldsmith in the presence of the artist, as an instance of open flattery to a person whose reputation did not entitle him to it, and, at the same time, of injustice to much greater men, namely, Voltaire, Hume, and Gibbon, resemblances to whom Goldsmith professed to see in those personages introduced into the picture under the names of Scepticism, Sophistry, and Infidelity, and who were represented as being overpowered by the angel of Truth. Among other things, Goldsmith told the artist that Beattie and his book would be forgotten in ten years, but "your allegorical picture and Voltaire will live to your disgrace as a flatterer." Goldsmith might be honest enough in this rebuke, but the principle of it was wrong. It was not necessarily a personal homage to Beattie, but simply to that Truth of which Beattie, up to the measure of his ability, was the representative and champion; and Reynolds was embodying on his canvas no more than was absolutely certain,—that Truth must ultimately triumph over Infidelity and every form of error.

The death of Oliver Goldsmith took place in 1774; by which event Sir Joshua lost a true-hearted though somewhat eccentric friend. It is said that he was considerably affected by it, and that he did not "touch his pencil for a whole day after it;"—not a very extreme mark of grief, we should say, for the loss of a friend, and yet it was so accounted by those who knew the habits of Reynolds. He further testified his respect for his friend by directing his funeral, and by acting as executor on his estate, if estate it might be called where estate was none—unless a huge debt and a confused mass of papers might be so designated.

About this time Sir Joshua painted the portraits of the members of the Dilettanti Club. He was elected a member of the Academy of Florence, and presented that body with a portrait of himself, painted by his own hand. This portrait is said to have raised the British school of art in the estimation of the Florentines. He was attacked as a plagiarist by a fellow-painter of the name of Hone, envious of his fame,—an attack which roused the indignation of his friends more

than it disturbed Reynolds himself. This was succeeded by some sharp criticism on the evanescence of several of the colours which he was fond of using, and which seems to have been warranted, as Sir Joshua, after a considerable time, and when he saw that some of his pictures were manifestly deteriorating, made up his mind to abandon them. In 1777 seven of his Discourses on Art were collected into a volume, and inscribed to the King, with an elaborate preface. His enthusiasm for his art was greatly offended by a remark (certainly not to be expected from a man in the position of him who made it) which fell from the lips of Dr. Tucker, the Dean of Gloucester, to the effect that "a *pin-maker* was a more useful and valuable member of society than Raphael." Sir Joshua's reply, when it was reported to him, is worth notice. "That is an observation," he said, "of a very narrow mind; a mind that is confined to the mere objects of commerce—that sees with a microscopic eye but a part of the great machine of the economy of life, and thinks that small part of it which he sees, the whole. Commerce is the means, not the end of happi-



ness or pleasure ; the end is a rational enjoyment by means of arts and sciences. It is therefore the highest degree of folly to set the means in a higher esteem than the end. It is as much as to say that the brick-maker is superior to the architect."

Reynolds had now attained the ripe age of fifty-four, and although he had secured both fame and fortune, his professional labours suffered no diminution. His price for a portrait was now fifty guineas, and the demands upon his pencil were as great as ever. He exhibited in 1780 a number of excellent pictures in the gallery at Somerset House, to which place the Royal Academy was that year removed. These were portraits of Miss Beauclerc as the *Una* of Spenser, and heads of Gibbon the historian and Lady Beaumont. During this year also he was engaged on a series of allegorical pictures for the window of the New College Chapel at Oxford. These were seven personifications of the virtues, Faith, Hope, Charity, Temperance, &c. Shortly after this he made a visit to the Continent, and inspected some of its eminent galleries. After a short time he returned to London. His health continued

vigorous till he was fifty-eight years of age, when, however, he was prostrated by a shock of paralysis. From this shock, which was comparatively a slight one, he soon recovered. Upon the death of Allan Ramsay in 1784, Reynolds succeeded him in the office of King's Painter—an office which could bring him neither fame nor emolument, as by this time he was largely in possession of both, and the salary attached to the office was only nominal, being fifty pounds a year. Nevertheless, at the desire of his Sovereign, he accepted it. His principal pictures this year were the Fortune-teller, the portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse, and his portrait of Miss Kemble. These are regarded as among his most eminent works. But if this was a year of honour and fame, it was also one of serious trial and loss. His great friend, with whom he had been on terms of the closest intimacy for many years, Dr. Johnson, died on December 13th of this year. As was to have been expected, Sir Joshua felt this to be a very heavy blow. There is an affecting circumstance, highly creditable to Johnson, mentioned in connection with his last illness.

A day before his death he said to Reynolds, "I have three requests to make, and I beg that you will attend to them, Sir Joshua: forgive me thirty pounds, which I borrowed from you; read the Scriptures; and abstain from using your pencil on the Sabbath-day." Reynolds promised for all three, and, it is said, scrupulously kept his promise.

In 1786 he painted a subject from the Greek mythology—the Infant Hercules strangling the Serpents—for Catherine of Russia, and for which he received from that Empress fifteen hundred guineas, together with a gold box bearing her portrait set in diamonds. His next important works were a series of illustrations of Shakespeare, intended to furnish engravings for a new edition of the great dramatist, projected by Boydell. These were three in number, on the subjects of Puck, Macbeth and the Witches, and the Death of Cardinal Beaufort. Thus did this eminent man continue in the strength of his powers, and in the diligent practice of his art, until he had attained to his sixty-sixth year, when, to the dismay of himself and friends, he was suddenly incapacitated by a mysterious ail-

ment for all further work. "One day," says one of his biographers, "in the month of July 1789, while finishing the portrait of the Marchioness of Hertford, he felt a sudden decay of sight in his left eye. He laid down the pencil, sat a little while in mute consideration, and never lifted it more." This sad and sudden eclipse never passed away. He lost entirely the sight of his left eye, and that of the other was considerably weakened; and so his long and prosperous career as an artist was unexpectedly brought to a close.

In December of the following year he delivered his last address at the Royal Academy, and on that occasion reiterated for the last time his unbounded admiration of Michael Angelo, stating that he desired that the latest words from his lips to the Academy should be the name of that illustrious artist. He lived little more than a year afterwards. His infirmities increased so as to confine him very much to the house, and he died at Leicester Square on the 23rd of February 1792, in the sixty-ninth year of his age. He was buried in St. Paul's, near the tomb of the architect of the building, Sir Christopher Wren.

In addition to his great fame as a painter, he was not without weight and popularity as a writer. In this department, indeed, his efforts were of necessity only occasional. Besides his well-known "Discourses on Art," he has left behind him a "Tour to Flanders and Holland," consisting of remarks on paintings seen by him in these countries in 1781; also "Notes on Du Fresnoy's Poem," and three papers in the "Idler." Altogether he was a man not only of eminent ability, but of extraordinary perseverance and concentration of aim. From the first impulses of his boyhood in the direction of art he never diverged. He yielded to the instinct within him, but he did not content himself with simply doing that—he followed it up by diligent study and culture; and he reaped his reward in a life of honour and prosperity up to the largest wish of his heart, and he will ever remain a striking and instructive example of how much may be done by beginning early in life in the work for which nature has fitted us, and by adhering to that course with steadfastness and perseverance to the end.



IX.

Sir Matthew Hale.

**T**HE life of this great and good man might be looked upon, at first sight, as in some degree opposed to the truth which this book is intended to illustrate, inasmuch as it shows in him for a short time a tendency to habits very different from those by which he was ultimately and greatly distinguished. But the discrepancy is in appearance only, not in reality; since the fact of his yielding to gay frivolities for a brief space was a natural, and almost inevitable, reaction in one who had been subjected previously, and while still very young, to an unnaturally rigid restraint. The natural solidity of his character speedily recovered itself from this exceptional condition, and the seriousness which marked even his boyhood regained the ascendant, and steadily deepened into that exemplary piety

by which the whole of his subsequent life was rendered so beautifully conspicuous.

He was born on the 1st of November 1609, at the village of Alderly, in Gloucestershire. His father was a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, and his mother belonged to the ancient and respectable family of Poyntz, of Iron Acton.

It is seldom that we have to record such tender sensibility of conscience as belonged to the elder Hale, he having felt himself constrained to withdraw from his profession, the practice of which being, in his opinion, scarcely consistent with the rigid observance of truth. He seems to have felt himself occasionally brought into circumstances where he could not do the most which was possible for his client and preserve, at the same time, that amount of self-respect which was necessary to his peace of mind. Some may be inclined to smile at this as a weakness, but it is impossible not to admire the fine principle of conscientiousness in which it had its root.

His illustrious son was visited with the great calamity of the loss of both his parents at a very early period. First his mother died before he was three years old; and about a

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year after, his father. The immediate effect of this double deprivation was to place the young orphan (in terms of his father's will) under the care of a near relative resident in the same county of Gloucestershire; who being a rigid Puritan, sent him to a school belonging to that party, with the intention that he should become a clergyman. This school was pervaded by the austerity of discipline which was characteristic of the Puritans, and which placed an unwise, because an unnatural, restraint upon the feelings and instincts of boyhood. The consequence was, that when set free from this bondage by being sent to the university, he was easily led into the opposite extreme. Not that even then there was anything like gross vice discernible in his conduct; but he seems to have had a fondness for theatrical amusements, and athletic sports, while he abandoned the idea of the clerical profession. At first he thought of devoting himself to a military life, but circumstances turned him aside from this; and an eminent lawyer having been brought into contact with him in connection with some dispute about his succession to his father's property, and having been greatly impressed



with the subtlety and clearness of his judgment, strongly advised him to devote himself to the legal profession. This good advice he accepted, was enrolled in the society of Lincoln's Inn in 1629, and gave himself up so heartily to his studies that he is said to have read for a considerable period at the rate of sixteen hours a day.

The religious element in his character, which had shown itself in his boyhood, but which had been for some time in abeyance, was suddenly roused at this stage of his career. He was present at a meeting of some students in a tavern in the outskirts of London; when in the midst of their entertainment, one young man who had drunk to excess fell from his chair in a fit, and was for some time supposed to be dead. Hale assisted his companions in their endeavours to restore him, which were partially successful; but he was so struck by the incident that he immediately withdrew to another apartment, earnestly engaged in prayer to God for the recovery of the young man, while he supplicated grace for himself to be enabled to carry out the resolution which he now adopted, to withhold himself from all

participation in such scenes for the future, and no more to encourage those customs which foster intemperance, such as drinking healths, &c., as long as he lived. This resolution he kept, but it has been said that it was a source of no little annoyance to him when the Restoration of Charles II. inaugurated the reign of excess in every form, and when the drinking of the King's health even to intoxication was held as one of "the tests of loyalty in politics, and orthodoxy in religion."

Nothing could be more satisfactory than the progress which he continued to make in his legal studies. It fully vindicated the anticipations of his learned friend who had first pointed his thoughts in that direction, while it secured for him the respect and influence of the most distinguished members of the legal profession of the day. Among others to whom he thus became favourably known was the illustrious John Selden, whose influence upon young Hale was of the most beneficial kind. His own largeness of mind and richness of culture led him to see that the exclusive studies of Hale, although they might make him great in the technicalities of law, would still leave

him devoid of much that was necessary to constitute him a great lawyer; and hence he strongly advised him to widen the sphere and range of his reading, and along with the technical details of law, to enrich his mind by a large and general culture. It was one of the excellences of young Hale's character that he was so open to good advice, by whomsoever it might be tendered; and immediately after this contact with Selde we find him plunging into a variety of studies which he had hitherto overlooked; studies in theology, physiology, and anatomy, and regarding which he was enabled to give after-proof to the world that his acquaintance with them was by no means of a superficial nature.

While there is some doubt as to the exact period when he was called to the bar, it is generally believed that he entered upon the actual practice of his profession about the year 1636. He must have rapidly risen to eminence as a barrister, since he is mentioned in connection with important State trials so early as 1640. In the trial of Lord Strafford, which took place that year, his name is to be found. There are numerous other instances where his

services were called for, during the following years;—as, for example, in the trial of Laud in 1643; that of the eleven members in 1647; and, after the death of Charles I., in that of the Duke of Hamilton, who was impeached for treason in taking up arms against the Parliament. It is impossible, in short, to glance at the great trials of that stirring period without perceiving that he must have held a foremost place, both for ability and conscientiousness, among the professional men of his time.

He was one of those laymen who took part in ecclesiastical matters in 1643, having taken the Covenant as prescribed by the Parliament, and appearing occasionally with other non-clerics in the Assembly of Divines. In 1651 he took the "Engagement to be faithful and true to the Commonwealth without a King and House of Lords." This concession on his part secured for him certain advantages, although it would scarcely be fair to assert that it was for the sake of these advantages that his compliance was given. He was permitted to practise at the bar, and was shortly afterwards appointed a member of the Commission for taking steps towards the amending the law. While such

details of the proceedings of this Commission as are necessary to enable us to form a definite opinion of its results are wanting, sufficient is known, from the difference between the machinery of law courts before and during the Commonwealth, to warrant the conclusion that they had applied themselves to the work with earnestness and success. Such a step was indeed highly necessary at the time, and contributed not a little to strengthen the government of Cromwell; for that bold and shrewd man had sagacity enough to perceive the importance of enlisting the influence and services of such men as Hale, and even of using every endeavour to overcome the reluctance which he manifested, for a time, to join a Commission held from one who had arrived at supreme power in so abnormal a manner. This reluctance was conquered only after many entreaties. He was raised to the Bench of the Court of Common Pleas in January 1653.

Not long after this he sat as one of the knights of the shire, for the county of Gloucester, in Cromwell's first Parliament of five months; and although he does not seem to have taken a very active share in its pro-

ceedings, he was enabled to defeat the fanatical and barbarous proposal of some zealots for the Commonwealth, to destroy the public records in the Tower and other places of deposit, as useless relics of a form of government and society which had passed away. The clearness of statement, and the cogency of reasoning, with which he set forth the mischief and folly of such a proposal, were such as to carry the House with him, so that the originators of the scheme were constrained to withdraw it. There is abundant evidence that he was not a republican at heart, although he accepted the Republic as a temporary necessity of the times ; and all parties allow that the whole of his conduct, especially in the administration of justice, was characterized by the highest honour, and a noble independence of spirit. Everything like interference with the free course of justice he firmly resisted, allowing no dictation, even on the part of Cromwell himself ; and on one occasion when he learned that the jury was packed at his instance, he discharged them, and positively refused to try the case. It is stated that for this noble act Cromwell indignantly reprimanded him, telling

him that "he was not fit to be a judge;" to which he calmly replied, that "it was very true."

He continued to hold his position as a Judge of the Common Pleas, till the death of Cromwell, but he declined to receive any new commission from his successor, Richard Cromwell; and although great influence was brought to bear upon him, it was of no avail. He kept his resolution, saying that "he would act no longer under such authority."

Little doubt is now entertained, that had the advice of Hale been followed on the abdication of Richard Cromwell, with reference to the best mode of procedure in recalling Charles II., many serious evils, connected with the "wicked, turbulent, and sanguinary reign" of that monarch, might have been avoided.

He had been again returned by his native county to act as a member of that Parliament, or Convention, by which the restoration of Charles was to be accomplished. It was suggested by Hale, that the recall should not be of a simple and absolute nature, but should be accompanied with such conditions as would serve to put some restraint upon the wayward

and selfish tendencies of the King; that, for this purpose, a committee should be appointed, for the purpose of considering the concessions which had been offered by Charles I. during the war, in order to their being made the basis of proposals, to be drawn up and formally presented, for his acceptance, to the King. This important suggestion, which the well-known character of Charles rendered so obviously necessary, was, on the motion of Monk, rejected almost unanimously by the Convention, on the ground that the army and the nation at large were in such an unsettled condition, that the most calamitous consequences might follow upon the delay which should thus be occasioned, and that there was a pressing necessity for an immediate settlement of the government.

There was much plausibility in these considerations, and yet the whole current of after events, culminating in a second Revolution within thirty years, showed that the *festina lente* policy of Hale, with a view to securing some palpable check upon Charles, would have been the wiser course to have followed. The settlement of the nation might have been somewhat delayed, but it would have been more



satisfactory, and more likely to last when it came. The Restoration took place, as is well known, in the month of May 1660, when the Lord Chancellorship was given to Lord Clarendon. This sagacious and eminent man left no means untried in order to impart stability and moral weight to the new administration; and among these means was his endeavour to fill all the high places of justice with men of the loftiest character he could find. Among others Hale was one whom he greatly desired to see in a position of prominence, and he accordingly offered him the appointment of Lord Chief Baron. The anxieties and labours of public life, however, had by this time become irksome to him, and for a considerable time he refused the appointment. He had never ceased to attend to the duties of religion, and these had become more a part of his life now than ever. He was exceedingly averse to undertake any duties which would abbreviate his opportunities for attending to these.

In a collection of his law tracts, published by Mr. Hargrave, we find a curious and interesting paper from Hale's own hand, in which

he sets forth, with characteristic honesty and simplicity, his various reasons for desiring exemption from any place in the public service. One of these is, "the smallness of his estate, being not above £500 per annum, six children unprovided for, and a debt of £1000 lying upon him." We should have been inclined to think that this would have been a reason for accepting office, rather than refusing it; but it is evident that at that time the emoluments of such offices were small, while the incidental expenses were so great, that, to a man of independence and integrity, the latter more than counterbalanced the former. Another reason was, that "he was not so well able to endure travel and pains as formerly; that his constitution of body required some ease and relaxation;"—and to this he added, that "he had of late time declined the study of the law, and principally applied himself to other studies, now more easy, grateful, and seasonable for him." Two of what he curiously enough calls "infirmities" are next alluded to, as tending to disqualify him for such avocations; "first, an aversion to the pomp and grandeur necessarily incident to

them ; and secondly, *too much piety*, clemency, and tenderness, in cases of life, which might prove an unserviceable temper."

It has been said that when a man advances a *number* of reasons for any particular course, he is more likely to be over-ruled in his decision, and induced to change his mind, than when he takes his stand only upon *one*. So it was, at all events, in this case with Hale ; for, after all, his scruples were overcome, and on the 7th of November he accepted the appointment of Lord Chief Baron. Lord Clarendon was pleased to compliment him on the occasion, stating, as he handed him his commission, that " if the King could have found an honester and fitter man for that employment, he would not have advanced him to it ; and that he had therefore preferred him because he knew no other who deserved it so well." To his other honours was added, some time after this, that of knighthood, which it required some effort to make him accept.

Some confusion of opinion has arisen in connection with the name of Sir Matthew Hale and the trial of the regicides, which took place in the month of October preceding his ap-

pointment as Lord Chief Baron, in consequence of his name being found among the commissioners on that occasion. From its absence, however, from all the reports of the trial, it is evident that he took no part in the proceedings; the name of Hale, as well as those of the two other judges elect, having been merely entered in the commission as a matter of form, while their patents were not made out till the following term. The office of Lord Chief Baron was held by him for eleven years, and all parties admit that his whole deportment, both as a private individual and as a judge, was of such an exemplary nature, as not only to maintain his own high reputation, but greatly to exalt that of the court over which he presided. He was remarkably impartial in his decisions, and never more so than in those Exchequer cases where the interests of the Crown were involved.

That his opinions were not always enlightened and wise, must, of course, be admitted. He seems to have shared, for example, in the prevalent opinion of the times respecting witchcraft; and this led to a judicial utterance on one occasion which involved serious results,

and led to much severe remark. Two women had been put upon their trial for witchcraft at the assizes of Bury St. Edmunds, in the year 1665, when the Chief Baron is alleged to have stated to the jury, that "he made no doubt at all that there were such creatures as witches;"—a sentiment which, proceeding from a judge so highly respected, no doubt contributed to the deplorable verdict which brought them in guilty, involving a capital sentence, which was actually carried into effect.

He took a great interest in the rebuilding of the city of London, after the wide-spread conflagration of 1666. One of the clauses in the Act of Parliament bearing on this, empowered the judges to sit singly as adjudicators, in cases of compensation to parties whose property might be interfered with in the course of carrying out the plan. None of them entered into these labours with such enthusiasm as Hale. His zeal was great, and the more praise-worthy that these were extra-judicial labours, for which no remuneration was provided.

We should scarcely have expected at this time of life, when his infirmities were increas-

ing upon him, that he would have been induced to accept a still more laborious and responsible office. And yet such was the case; for on the death of Sir John Kelyng, in 1671, he became his successor, as Lord Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench. He was equally exemplary in his attention to his duties in this capacity, so long as his strength permitted, and his name is found in all the reported cases which came before that court, till the end of 1675. But the period of his public usefulness was now far advanced, and was speedily brought to a close by an inflammatory attack, which prostrated his strength, and depressed his spirits, so that he constantly asserted the impossibility of his recovery.

He immediately resolved to give up his commission, and applied to the Lord Keeper Finch to relieve him. This was not attended to for some little time, when Hale, becoming more and more sensible of declining strength, surrendered personally his patent to the King, who received it in the kindest spirit, and promised that his pension should be continued during his life.

The brief remainder of his days was spent in pious and meditative retirement, preparing himself for that better world which had long been the dwelling of his thoughts. His friend Richard Baxter thus alludes to the closing scenes: "It is not the least of my pleasure that I have lived some years in his more than ordinary love and friendship, and that we are now waiting which shall be first in heaven; whither he saith he is going, with full content and acquiescence in the will of a gracious God, and doubts not but we shall shortly live together."—On his withdrawal from public life, he went to live in a house at Acton. Afterwards he removed to his own house at Alderly, intending to die there; and there he did die, under a combined attack of asthma and dropsy, on Christmas Day, 1678.

Such is a brief sketch of one of the most eminent lawyers and most upright judges that ever adorned the judicial courts of our country. But he was not more celebrated as a judge than he was humble, earnest, and devoted as a Christian. His religion was a living power in his soul, interpenetrating his whole life, and shaping his whole conduct after a heavenly

fashion and type. The different stages of his career were linked to each other by a steady growth of development and progress; and his closing scenes were those of the placid workman taking his rest at the end of the day; and of the patient, hopeful Christian, expecting the voice of his Master ere long to call him home. His published works were numerous and important. They relate to subjects philosophical, scientific, forensic, and religious. The last were some time ago collected into two octavo volumes, and published under the title of "Moral and Religious," with life by Bishop Burnet, and appendix by the Rev. Mr. Thirlwall. They are exceedingly valuable for their sound sense and their rich devotional spirit. Altogether he is one of those rare individuals who, while they illustrate the advantages of patient industry in their profession, exemplify at the same time the majesty of conscience, and the elevating influence which a sense of higher relations and responsibilities invariably exerts upon the character and life.





X.

Jacques Lafitte.

**T**HE subject of our present sketch, Jacques Lafitte, was one of the most remarkable examples of self-elevation on record, while at the same time he strikingly illustrates the lesson which this book is intended to teach. Certainly there have been few boyhoods which have presented a more distinct prophecy of the success of after-life than his did, and few consequently which it is more important to recommend to the attention of youth in every country and age.

He was born at Bayonne on October 24th, 1767. His father was a carpenter in that town, of honest reputation, but, chiefly owing to the largeness of his family, which consisted of ten children, exceedingly poor. In consequence of this he does not seem to have been able to send his children to school; at all events, it is certain that Jacques received no

education but what he was able to take up, as opportunity offered, at his own hand. That a boy with such an unfavourable beginning should rise to be the first banker and financier in France, and that, too, during such a trying period as the Empire and the Restoration, must be regarded as a circumstance implying the existence of extraordinary qualities, cultivated and applied with equally extraordinary wisdom and care. Nor can he be said to have acquired anything like a start in life, in his *native* place, or even such experience in business as might prove a foundation for his future achievements. His only apprenticeship there was that of an errand boy, in the office of a notary.

When he was about twenty years of age he repaired to the metropolis, hoping to find better scope for his talents and the means of supporting himself, and, possibly, of doing something for his family at home. The incident connected with his arrival at Paris and his first engagement there, although very well known, is too interesting and significant to be omitted in this notice.

He had travelled all night on his way from Bayonne and arrived in Paris early in the day,

breakfastless and penniless. He was wearied and worn out by travel and hunger, and was utterly without the means of procuring any relief. His whole stock-in-trade was a letter of introduction to a Monsieur Perregeaux, a first-class banker. No doubt he was blessed with a good appearance, and what was better still, a trust in Providence, and a steadfast resolution to get on. On arriving at Paris his first business was to ascertain where the office of the banker was situated, and then to make his way to it as he best could. He was so fortunate as to find M. Perregeaux on his first call; he presented his letter, and with tremulous anxiety waited the result. That result was unfavourable; the establishment was at present overcrowded with clerks, and he could not possibly take in another. The poor young man turned from the door in silent disappointment. He knew not whither he was to bend his steps; he knew not where he was to obtain a meal. His one hope had failed him, and now he was emphatically in that gay and heartless capital—heartless, like all capitals, to the friendless and the poor—without a home and without a friend. As he was passing

through the court-yard some small object on the ground attracted his eye. It was nothing more than a common pin, which nevertheless he stooped to pick up, and stuck it in his sleeve. This seemingly indifferent act was not indifferent in the view of the rich banker, who happened to observe it as he looked accidentally from the window. He saw in the act the pledge and the germ of carefulness and thrift, and that respect for littles, which lies at the basis of all true industry, and all enlightened finance. The consequence was, that he called him back and gave him a trial in some very subordinate department of his establishment.

This was all that was necessary for such a person as Lafitte. He only required to get a footing, however humble—to be put on trial in short—in order to his achieving for himself a position of respect and confidence, in relation to his employer. In addition to his moral and intellectual qualities, he had a fine outward appearance, and a frank, manly, and courteous manner. And this last is by no means to be despised by young men. It is not a substitute for more sterling qualifications,

but neither is it incompatible with them, and it undoubtedly tends, in no small degree, to facilitate their recognition, and to clear, in a general way, the path of the young man towards ultimate success.

Accordingly we find that young Lafitte soon secured the confidence of the banker, and rose rapidly in his esteem. He found that that carefulness which was manifested by the picking up of the pin was associated with sterling principle, generous instincts, and even great breadth and grasp of mind. He found also that he was gifted with the faculty of close application to his duties, systematic arrangement of his work, and, together with the power of controlling his own thoughts, an openness of mind to receive the suggestions of others, and a readiness to turn them to good account. It would have been singular, indeed, if this combination of qualities had failed to make an early and a favourable impression. They did not so fail, for, on the contrary, we find that although he had only entered the establishment of M. Perregeaux as a supernumerary clerk, at a salary of £48 per annum, he had not been there two years when he was appointed book-

keeper to the whole establishment. This was in 1789. In 1792, again, he was made cashier, in 1800 chief clerk and manager, junior partner in 1804, and, on the death of Perregeaux in 1809, he became sole partner of the concern. Thus, in the course of twenty years, or rather less, this youth, who had arrived in Paris without a *sou* in his pocket, and without a friend to look to, rose through all the intermediate steps, beginning as a mere supernumerary, until he had attained to the highest and most influential commercial position in France. Nor was his elevation to the head of the firm to be traced to the fact of his predecessor having no near relative who might have taken his place, for he had a son. This son, however, differed from his father and from Lafitte alike. He drew a handsome income from the business, but that was the only relation which he had with it. M. Perregeaux had sense enough to perceive which of the two was the competent person, and to appoint Lafitte his executor and his successor accordingly. He had fallen on hard times for great money establishments, as the terrible storm of the Revolution was calculated to test these to the

uttermost. Still Lafitte seems to have kept his ground, and even to have acquired a growing reputation as a master of finance. The same year in which he became the sole representative of his firm he was appointed director of the Bank of France, the duties of which office he discharged while still conducting the affairs of his own large establishment. A few years after this we find him acting as Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce of the Seine, and some time thereafter he was elected to the office of President of the Chamber of Commerce. His valuable services were equally appreciated by the party in power after the downfall of the empire, the Provisional Government having then appointed him governor of the Bank of France. This was in 1814. In connection with this appointment, he gave the first proof on a great scale of that public-spirited liberality which so strikingly marked his subsequent career. He declined to accept any remuneration for the office, thus relieving the public expenditure to the extent of a hundred thousand francs a year.

We have formerly stated that Lafitte was a man who was capable of taking a large view

of a subject, and at this time his sagacity was of great service to the state. He arrived at the conclusion, that as in every country, so especially in a country so unsettled as France at that time was, it would be of the utmost importance that its great national bank should be placed on a footing which would make it as far as possible independent of those fluctuations of government which were so common at the period. He felt that, in proportion as this should be done, a bulwark of safety would be erected for the state itself, and a break-water obtained against the shocks which might be anticipated from the revolutionary passions and reactions then so frequent and violent. This desirable result he was, by his great knowledge and influence, enabled to accomplish, in consequence of which it became a prevalent opinion that whatever might be upset, the Bank of France would stand firm, at least as long as Lafitte was at its head. And this opinion was fully justified by facts, for once and again, partly by his admirable management, partly by his personal liberality, he was enabled to guide it through crises which it seemed all but impossible that it should



survive. Such, for example, was the case when, on the return of Napoleon from Elba, Louis XVIII. applied to the governor for a sum amounting to several millions, a demand which was more easily made than answered, and yet it was answered, although the particular manner is not very well known. Much about the same time the Duke of Orleans applied for a loan of one million and six hundred thousand francs, offering a premium of twenty per cent. upon the loan. This also Lafitte was not only able to meet, but did so without charging any per centage at all. This is a specimen of those numerous acts of more than princely munificence by which he has secured for himself so high and honourable a name.

One striking illustration of his wisdom and integrity is found in the fact that he possessed and retained the confidence and respect of all political parties, and this not because he had no decided political opinions, for he was a firm and uncompromising liberal; and nothing could induce him to swerve from his convictions. Still he was trusted by all, he was applied to by all, and he was always ready to give his advice or assistance in matters of

finance without reference to the political opinions of any. Napoleon the First remitted to him, after the battle of Waterloo, the immense sum of five millions in gold as being the most competent party to get it transferred to England or America, and there put to the credit of the fallen and exiled emperor. This Lafitte accomplished, and in testimony of his gratitude Napoleon bequeathed to him the interest which this vast sum had gathered. Such, however, was the chivalrous honour and munificence of the banker that he declined to receive it, saying that he did not accept the charge of the money on the understanding that it was to carry interest.

A man of such princely generosity is not likely at any time, and least of all at such a time as that in which he lived, to be long without the recurrence of calls for its exercise. The Imperial army had not been receiving their pay with regularity, and when the allies entered France after the battle of Waterloo, that army refused to disband till they should receive their arrears. This was a formidable difficulty, for the public exchequer was empty, and the Provisional Government were under

the necessity of applying again to the head of the bank. In these circumstances Lafitte, not deeming it prudent to summon the Council, advanced on his own responsibility the requisite sum, amounting to somewhere about two millions. Another and a somewhat similar trial immediately succeeded, in the form of a demand by Blucher for a very large sum within twenty-four hours. Here also Lafitte had to fly to the rescue by personally guaranteeing the money, which was afterwards raised by subscription. Such extraordinary acts as these could not fail to secure for him the utmost confidence and respect. He had taken his seat with the Opposition when elected Deputy of Paris in 1816, and yet that very ministry against whose principles and policy he strongly protested appointed him a member of a commission appointed to inquire into the causes of the depressed condition of the exchequer. On this commission he rendered effectual service, giving the benefit of his large experience, and not hesitating to expose and denounce those wrong principles of taxation and finance which had threatened the country with so many evils, and from which it was still suffering greatly.

He averted another crisis in 1818, which seemed about to precipitate revolution and anarchy; and all these services and sacrifices of mind and money were accompanied with the steadfast refusal to appropriate the large salary which rightfully belonged to him as the governor of the bank. Many other instances of self-sacrificing generosity might be mentioned, as, for example, his heading the subscription for the family of General Foy (whom he had signally helped during his lifetime) with the sum of fifty thousand francs, and his gift to Chateaubriand of ten thousand francs at a time when that eminent man was on the verge of ruin, and when he had turned to all other quarters for relief in vain.

It has been stated that Lafitte had no confidence in the government. A charter, indeed, had been granted to the people when the old dynasty was reinstated. But he was troubled with fears that it would not be long respected, and these fears were confirmed, indeed fully vindicated, by various encroachments calculated to produce irritation and alarm. These encroachments reached their culmination in 1827 in the proposed dissolution of the Na-

tional Guard; and then it was that Lafitte felt himself compelled for the first time to sink in a manner the financier in the statesman and the patriot. He became the avowed leader of the Opposition, and impeached the Ministers of Charles X. His great influence and popularity rendered this a serious matter to the government.

The words of M. de Lomenie indicate the sort of position which he held. "Placed in the foreground of the defenders of the charter, popular as well by his opinions as by his generosity, the opulent banker finds himself surrounded by all the notabilities of the press and of the tribune." This contemplated impeachment of course threw him more than ever into collision with the Crown, and established him as the champion of the people; and, indeed, by this time he was becoming fully aware of the fact,—or rather we should say impressed with the conviction,—that the days of the elder branch of the Bourbon dynasty were numbered, and that the downfall of Charles was only a question of weeks or months. This, considering his own political views, could not be in itself a matter of regret; but then he

knew what fearful anarchy was certain to succeed if matters were not so previously arranged that the supreme power should at once pass into the possession of one whose claim might be generally recognised. His desire at first was to prevent the crisis he feared, if it were possible, but becoming more and more convinced of the hopelessness of such an attempt, there was nothing left but to make it as little disastrous to the country as possible. The arrangement of this was the problem on which he now occupied his thoughts, and these thoughts terminated on the Duke of Orleans, afterwards the citizen king, Louis Philippe.

That prince was of liberal sentiments, and Lafitte flattered himself that, should he succeed to the throne, past experience as well as his own avowed principles would lead him to rule in a just and liberal spirit. This idea once seated in his mind, but undreamt of at the time by any other, he cautiously communicated to some like-minded with himself, and the cause, thus nurtured in secret, made rapid progress till it suddenly ripened into fruition in connection with the Revolution of July 1830. The events of that crisis are too

well known to require to be recounted here. Immediately after the issuing of the dreaded "ordinances," and the signing of the protest of the deputies, Lafitte, Perrier, and others repaired to the palace. A general insurrection had taken place, of which the palace of the Duke of Orleans was the acknowledged centre; and when the Minister arrived with the announcement that the king had recalled the ordinances, Lafitte boldly replied, "It is too late; there is no longer a Charles the Tenth." In connection with this a deputation was sent to the Duke of Orleans offering him the lieutenancy of the kingdom. Of this deputation Lafitte was a member; and there is a curious incident narrated of him here. While on his way to the duke he injured his foot in scrambling over a barricade. The duke noticed it, and called attention to the wound. "Don't mind my feet," was the reply of Lafitte, "look to my hands, there is a crown in them." There is an impression on the part of some that it was M. Thiers who proposed the Duke of Orleans as chief magistrate. But this is a mistake. The act in question was that of Lafitte, for although he endeavoured to arrest

the insurrection at first, going through the barricades to the headquarters of Marshal Marmont and expostulating with that officer that he should use his influence with the king to prevail upon him to withdraw the ordinances which had caused the insurrection, yet, when he failed, he put himself at once in the front of the movement party, and as we have seen, acted as the spokesman of the deputation sent to the duke.

His participation in these events, while patriotic in their motive, and quite in accordance with his political views, were destined to be fraught with disastrous effects, so far as his own fortunes were concerned. Once that an individual has assumed a prominent position in any great movement, such as the insurrection of July, it is difficult for him to go back, or even to stand still,—any such hesitancy is apt to be looked upon as unfaithfulness to the cause, and thus it has happened that many an eminent man has been swept forward by the revolutionary tide much farther than he had ever intended. He may be able to guide the current of feeling to a certain extent when he is altogether powerless to



check it. It would have been manifestly for the interest of Lafitte, after the transition crisis was over, to have slipped back at once into his own proper kingdom of finance; and had he done this he might have retained to the last the immense fortune of two millions sterling, which he had amassed in the most honourable manner, and which, notwithstanding his extraordinary liberality at various times, he still possessed. But unfortunately for himself, and for the nation as well, he was induced, on the 3d of November 1830, to accept the office of Prime Minister (President du Conseil), and also that of Minister of Finance. The first disclosure to him of the error of this step was in the want of support to the measures which he brought forward, even on the part of those who had stood shoulder to shoulder with him in the revolutionary crisis, and on whom he had the most implicit reliance. The commercial relations of the country had been greatly disturbed by the dynastic convulsion, and failures were taking place on every side. A new revolution began to be feared; and, in short, Lafitte was so convinced that he was at present not in his

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proper place, that he resigned office in March 1831, and was succeeded by Perrier.

A severe blow, however, had by this time been given to his fortunes. The Revolution had affected his credit as well as that of all others, and his occupancy of high and engrossing political office necessitated the neglect almost entirely of his own establishment. In the exercise, too, of that wonderful liberality which characterized him almost to rashness, he had put his money at the command of the new government, many of whom were too ready to appropriate it to their own uses. A great monetary crisis, which was felt more or less throughout the whole of Europe, succeeded to this, and in the downfall of hitherto eminent and flourishing houses, that of Lafitte, who was the creditor of many of them to a large extent, could not escape. In this emergency he at once determined, that no one might be a loser by him, to sell off all his estates, which still amounted to fifty million francs. One of these estates, the Forest of Breteuil, he disposed of to Louis Philippe for ten millions of francs.

This tremendous sacrifice, however, was not

found equal to the occasion; and in order to meet the remaining demands, he determined to bring also to sale his hotel in Paris, in which the new monarchy had been formed, as well as his share in the business of his bank. This, however, was more than public feeling would allow, and a national subscription, which amounted to one million and a half francs testified the general sense of the past patriotism and munificence of the fallen, though still great and high-minded financier, and secured the splendid residence for himself and his family. To this subscription the ex-emperor of the French subscribed six hundred francs. Some few years after, when his whole assets became known, he was found, after discharging all his liabilities in full, to have a balance left of eight millions of francs.

It is gratifying to think that the great losses which Lafitte had sustained, chiefly from his public spirit and instinctive munificence, did not lessen in the slightest degree that respect and gratitude which he might well have expected at the hands of his countrymen. In 1837 he was elected representative of the sixteenth arrondissement of Paris, and

took his seat in opposition to that very government which he had mainly contributed to set up. Already he had seen that a change of dynasty does not necessarily imply an improvement of administration and a boon to the people. The professed principles may be sound, and the new programme may be salutary, but unless these are in the hands of patriotic and conscientious men, they simply mock the hopes of the nation by promises which are never to be fulfilled, and expectations of good which are never to be realized. This he felt to be the case at the present time, and on his last public appearance in the House, at the opening of the session of 1844, he did not hesitate to state his convictions and his fears, significantly reminding Ministers of the promises of the Revolution. Four years after was afforded the awful comment on the warning voice of the upright and wise old man.

The year in which he gave that warning was destined to be his last upon earth. He was seized with an affection of the lungs, and was suddenly cut off on May 26, 1844, being seventy-seven years of age. He was buried with every mark of personal and public respect

in the Cemetery of Pere-la-Chaise. Twenty thousand people are said to have attended his funeral, and Arago and Dupin delivered orations over his grave.

Such is a brief sketch of the career of one of the most industrious, honourable, and generous of men,—one of the truest patriots of France, and one of the ablest financiers the world has known.

His commencement was small, and his friends were few, or rather none at all. He arrived in the great metropolis of France without either money or prospects, and yet, by his unconquerable perseverance and his unswerving integrity, he raised himself to the position of highest influence and authority both in the commercial and political arena. His life was one more added to the countless illustrations that in our earlier stages we are fashioning our future,—carving out for ourselves a position of usefulness and honour, or the opposite, according as we form our habits, and apply our faculties, in the youth, and early manhood of life.





